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MODERN

FRENCH LIFE.

EDITED

BY MRS. GORE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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LONDON:
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PREFACE.

THE following sketches of the manners of the day in France, are selected from the works of eminent writers by an able linguist, for whom I have undertaken the task of revision. They may be accepted as a candid and accurate representation of the habits and spirit of "Modern French Life;" and it needs no exercise of trite morality to point out how widely and how offensively they differ from our own. The influence of conventional marriages on domestic happiness may be fairly judged by the exemplification of the following pages. The frequency of duelling, of opening the letters of others and listening at doors, introduced as incidents into the various tales, and the effrontery with which

such actions are avowed by the perpetrators, suffice to prove the total contrast between our moral code, and that of our foreign neighbours.

For the sake of variety, two stories of Germany and Russia have been added to the collection, from the pens of two of the best Modern French novelists;—Alexandre Dumas, and Michel Masson.

C. F. Gore.

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CHAPTER I.

The clock of the Collège Bourbon had just struck three, and the hour was repeated by an old fashioned time-piece standing on the marble slab of a house in the Rue Joubert, the rich embellishments of which were in the style of Louis XIV. At that moment, a person possessing the crutch of Asmodeus, would have seen the silken curtains of a luxurious bed suddenly drawn open, a man of a certain age emerge with juvenile activity, ensconce his black velvet slippers, wrap himself up in an embroidered dressing gown, and, having lit the candles, commence the peregrination of his chamber,

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after the fashion of a bear revolving in his cage. After a few minutes of this monotonous exercise, he threw off his dressing gown, and dressed himself with an alacrity unusual at his time of life, muttering the following monologue:

"This state of uncertainty is intolerable! I will resolve my doubts, at any price. To lie awake in my bed, or keep watch in the middle of the street, is much the same annoyance; and in the street, I shall at least have air to breathe. One thing is certain—he followed her home from the Opera. But how he made his way there as soon as ourselves, without getting up behind the carriage, is unaccountable. He is quite equal to such a feat! I shall remind Baptiste that it would be as well if he remained at his post, instead of chattering on the box with the coachman. If I had not been forced to take back that old fool who acts as her chaperon, I should have known what to do. I should have returned there; ay, returned, to be laughed at by my own servants. What signifies who

laughs! Let them only dare whisper a word! That woman will bring me to a premature old age!" said he, checking a sudden cough. "If I thought there were an understanding between them!—During the whole evening he never withdrew his eyes.—She *must* have remarked it!—The other day, at the concert, it was the same. It is time to put an end to his impertinences, which may be easily done;—but with respect to Ermance, alas! the case is different." As he uttered these last words, with a hesitating voice, the old gentleman threw up the window. The coldness of the night air struck upon his chest, and he was forced to have recourse to a dose of pectoral lozenges, to allay the fit of coughing with which he was seized. Nothing daunted by the chilling atmosphere, however, he flung on his well-furred cloak, intending to sally forth; but paused suddenly.

"My cough is nothing!" said he; "but at

this hour of the night, the Rue l'Evêque is not over safe, and to go forth unarmed would be the height of folly."

The tender-hearted old gentleman accordingly took his pistols from their case, and put them into his pocket.

"This is absurd!" said he. "Of what use were these weapons against several assailants?—Such a death would be more than sufficiently romantic! Imagine the effect of reading in the newspapers, 'Monsieur Lareynie was found assassinated under the windows of Madame Dupastel.'"

Having replaced the pistols, he took from the chimney-piece a purse, containing a dozen pieces of gold.

"Forty-five francs will be enough," said he, counting over the money he took out. "It is not every night these pickpockets of the neighbourhood meet with such good fortune. This is more prudent than taking the pistols. To be robbed is nothing; but to be killed when my

life is not my own to throw away! I must manage to get out unknown to Baptiste; if not, let him dare to say a word!"

Having thus arranged his plan, Monsieur Lareynie opened and shut the doors with the precaution of a truant school-boy, descended the staircase on tiptoes, passed the porter's lodge like a phantom, disguising his voice when calling out to have the door opened.

Once in the street, he resumed his presence of mind and traversed the suspicious quarter of the Madeleine, at that time the favourite haunt of thieves. Safe and sound, however, did he arrive at the dwelling of the woman who had so cruelly deprived him of his sleep. His attention was first attracted towards a light shining through the blinds of a room on the first floor, as from the feeble flickering of a night lamp. From the door-way under which he stationed himself, the old gentleman fixed his eyes upon this mysterious light, the only one perceptible in the street. By degrees, the

morning dawned with dim uncertain light upon the upper stories of the houses. The stars were gradually disappearing in the heavens, and the ill supplied lamps of the streets were following their example. At last, the cock crowed; on hearing which, Monsieur Lareynie experienced a degree of remorse almost comparable with that of St. Peter.

"I have calumniated her!" said he, putting up the collar of his cloak to keep off the raw morning air. "My suspicions were as groundless as they were absurd. It is day, and if the coxcomb had dared introduce himself into the house, he would not have waited until now to come forth. Decidedly I have made an ass of myself! Still, it was certainly him whom I saw on this very spot. But what does that prove? only that he is in love with her, or at least that he wants to make her believe so. But though he have the impertinence to follow her, he cannot say that she gives him encouragement. I am persuaded she would not even look at him.

We men are apt to be over hasty in our judgements. Women are on that score our superiors. Poor dear Ermance! She has been sleeping the sleep of the just, little imagining that I am passing the night under her windows. Better she should never know it. Such follies are unworthy of my age. I am half dead with cold. At the Beresina to be sure,—but *then* I was twenty-three years younger!"

Prudence now suspended his soliloquy. The workmen were proceeding to their daily occupations, and the shops opening one after the other. Paris was gradually awaking, as so powerfully described by Desaugiers. At length, the great gates of the house inhabited by Madame Dupastel revolved upon their hinges, a little crooked-legged girl appeared, wielding a broom; whereupon Monsieur Lareynie drew his cloak over his eyes, and retreated, his heart relieved of its misgivings. The hour of mystery ceases with the appearance of the porter; though a favoured lover seldom

quits the house by the street door. Convinced of the injustice of his suspicions and the innocence of the object of his affections, the old soldier of the grand army slowly withdrew.

On reaching home he got into bed for a short, time; then took a bath, breakfasted, and committed himself to the hands of his valet-de-chambre. According to the custom of old age with juvenile pretensions, Monsieur Lareynie performed the ceremonies of his toilet with closed doors; and after operations as long as they were mysterious, dismissed his servant in order to survey the result in the glass. Upon his artistically shaved face, figured two whiskers of the deepest jet, harmonising with the luxuriant curls of a wig of matchless perfection.

"This accursed night has made me ten years older!" said he, rubbing his forehead with the tip of his finger, as if to efface the wrinkles which now appeared thrice as numerous as usual.

"My hair is a trifle too dark to-day, which

hardens the expression of my countenance. I must try a shade or two lighter. I am sure brown would become me; but it is now too late to change. She is so observant! What would she think? I had formerly splendid hair! *Had!*—why must I say had!—and why oh! why must I add, that I had then a heart I could call my own!"

The old gentleman repressed a rising sigh, put on his hat, and ordered his cabriolet. It was too cold for a tilbury, and any other vehicle was too quizzical for his pretensions. Half an hour afterwards, he entered the drawing room of Madame Dupastel, presenting a nosegay which had been waiting for him at the famed shop of Madame Adde.

CHAPTER II.

The woman thus triumphant over the years and reason of poor Monsieur Lareynie, was scarcely twenty-five; but her penetrating eye, perfect self-possession, and supercilious smile, announced a degree of sagacity and coquetry calculated to drive a man in love to despair, at least a dozen times in the course of the day. Though attired as if prepared to go out, she was writing close to the fire place; but on hearing him enter the room, turned her head, to receive with a semi-affectionate smile, her antiquated admirer.

"It is you then, Colonel?" said she, affecting surprise. "I did not expect you this

morning. What a beautiful bouquet. Pray leave it in the dining-room, for I have a slight head-ache."

The Colonel submitted to this request with amiable resignation; then, came and stood with his back against the mantle piece.

"You did not expect me?" said he. "Did you suppose it possible, I could pass a day without seeing you?"

"You appear to have recovered your gallantry!" replied Madame Dupastel; "so much the better! Any thing rather than your strange conduct of last night!"

"You are too severe!" said the old beau; "a friend would have called it melancholy, — dejection,—preoccupation.

"Caprice would be a more correct definition," said she, laughing; "by what right do you encroach upon the prerogative of my sex? What was the matter with you? My aunt informs me that you did not once address her while taking her home!"

"I was thinking of *you*," said the Colonel, with fond emotion.

"Of *me*, or *him*?"—

"Do you allude to the young jackanapes, Randeuil!"

"His name then is, Randeuil?"—inquired Madame Dupastel; "not an ugly name, by the way."

"Perhaps you think him as prepossessing as his name?"—demanded the old beau, ironically.

"More so; and I am sure you share my opinion."

The Colonel bit his lips with vexation.

"Ermance," replied he, "you know how much I love you. What pleasure can you find in tormenting me thus? Be more lenient towards a weakness, of which you are the origin! True love is never exempt from jealousy."

"Excuse me! I do not authorise your love, and will not endure your jealousy. It is a failing I detest. If you wish, therefore,

to please me, correct yourself of so vile a frailty."

"I will do my best!" said the Colonel, submissively. "Are you writing to your cousin," he continued a moment afterwards.

"To my cousin, or to some other person," said she, maliciously locking the letter into her desk.

"Perhaps to that seductive Adonis?" persisted Monsieur Lareynie, with vexation.

"That would be against all rule!" said she. "It is his business to commence the correspondence."

The drawing-room door was now softly opened, and the female attendant of Madame Dupastel entered, and presented a letter to her mistress, who broke it open with perfect indifference. But after reading a word or two, the signature caught her eye. A look of astonishment and curiosity instantly pervaded her countenance.

"Is the bearer waiting?" inquired she, after reading the letter.

"He is waiting in the street," replied the attendant, with a mysterious air. "It was a porter, Madam, who brought the letter."

Ermance seemed lost in reflection.

"And he is still waiting for an answer," added the attendant.

Madame Dupastel again cast her eyes upon the letter, and abruptly added: "Let him come up. Read this!" said she, handing the letter to the Colonel; who, eagerly seizing it, perused the following lines:

"Tax not with presumption or audacity, Madam, the step I have taken in imploring you to grant me the honour of an interview upon which depends the happiness of my life. My position is so critical, that the least delay would produce consequences you would be the first to regret. Five minutes' audience,

I entreat you! My name, as that of a stranger, has no claim to indulgence. But I appeal to your heart to perform an act of generosity.

"A single word, to relieve the anxiety of your most obedient servant,

"HIPPOLYTE RANDEUIL."

"Randeuil?" exclaimed the old beau, "is it he, then, who has the impertinence to write to you?"

"No great crime after all!" said Madame Dupastel, affecting to look serious.

"And do you intend to receive him?"

"Why should I close my door against him?"

"A man with whom you are unacquainted!"

"*You* know him, and if the proceeding be irregular, can present him in form."

"Impossible, you cannot be serious! You, in general so rigidly correct, receive a man who has so long importuned you?—Your conduct all but justifies his own!"

"Do you think me a woman likely to be

injured by such a concession?" inquired Madame Dupastel, gravely.

"The angels themselves are liable to suspicion. It is my duty to prevent a proceeding, of which you will one day see the impropriety. I will receive him myself."

The old Colonel was about to leave the room, when Ermance rose, surveyed him with an imperious air,

"I accept only the services I have demanded," said she.

"A private audience," exclaimed the Colonel, in despair.

"You are mistaken. It is only an interview he solicits; its being private depends upon yourself."

Monsieur Lareynie sank into a chair. "After all, Madam," said he, "what signifies a whim more or less?"—

Before Madame Dupastel could reply, the door opened again. A good looking young man, of elegant appearance, and whose counte-

nance betrayed the greatest emotion, entered, and advanced towards the mistress of the house; but suddenly paused, on perceiving the presence of a third person, whose eyes glistening under his artificial eyebrows, announced that the fortress was not to be taken by storm. Madame Dupastel quietly resumed her seat, unwilling to increase the embarrassment of the visitor. At last, he summoned courage to address her.

"When I took the liberty, Madam," said he, with an air of deep respect, "of soliciting the honour of an interview, I hoped it would be a private one."

"This gentleman is an old friend of my family," replied Ermance gravely; "you can have nothing to communicate which I do not wish him to hear."

The Colonel, with a look of gratitude for this concession, settled himself at ease in his arm chair.

"What I have to say, Madam, must be heard by you alone," replied Randeuil with a

firm but mild voice, "allow me, therefore, to speak to you without a witness."

"After the resolution expressed by Madame Dupastel, you have no right, Sir, to persist," said the Colonel abruptly; but Hippolyte turned short round upon the old beau.

"I addressed myself to this lady, Sir," said he; and advancing nearer towards the mistress of the house, reiterated his petition.

"Madame Dupastel has already told you," the Colonel was beginning, but he had not time to conclude his observation. Ermance was one of those women to whom despotism, under the form of counsel, is insupportable.

"Excuse me, my dear Colonel," said she, rising; and proceeding towards the dining-room door, threw it open, and beckoned Randeuil to follow her; then, with a despotic glance, nailed the old beau into his easy chair.

"Now, Sir," said she, addressing Hippolyte, who had followed her, "I wait your pleasure." Randeuil would fain have closed the door. "It

is useless," said she, with a mixture of irony and gravity.

"But he will overhear me!" cried the young man, glancing towards Monsieur Lareynie; who, seated despondingly in the arm chair, seemed to suffer the martyrdom of St. Lawrence. My friend is somewhat deaf," observed Ermance with a smile; "perhaps you know how to make yourself audible in a whisper?"—

CHAPTER III.

HAVING convinced himself that the old beau could not overhear him, Hippolyte adopted the suggestion of Madame Dupastel, and addressed himself to her in a voice of most earnest expression. "The subject, Madam, upon which I am about to speak, is of so delicate a nature, that to explain myself with propriety, requires more than reflection. Unfortunately, both time and presence of mind are wanting. Every minute's delay may be productive of irreparable consequences. Excuse, therefore, the discrepancies which may occur in so hurried a narrative, and the confusion which my extreme agitation must communicate to my language."

To this exordium, expressed with a degree

of vehemence indicative of the most violent passion, Ermance replied by a smile far from discouraging. "If the minutes be precious to *you*," said she, "I also have little time to lose. Let us dispense, therefore, with further preamble. In a few brief words, explain yourself."

"Willingly, Madam. I am desperately in love."

In spite of the love of authority so developed in her nature by the blind submission of her old beau, Madame Dupastel was embarrassed by the ready and complete acquiescence of her new friend. On hearing the avowal she had herself provoked, she involuntarily averted her head, like a young soldier who tries to avoid a shot. Quickly, however, recovering her weakness, she raised her eyes and fixed upon her interlocutor one of those winning glances which exercise over confiding hearts the attractive influence of the magnet.

"Your explanation is somewhat vague," said

she; "but it is my fault. I fear I must extend my indulgence to a few more words."

Too preoccupied by his own ideas to be a nice observer, Randeuil, far from detecting her meaning, ingenuously replied—"Again, Madam, I obey you. I am desperately in love with Abeille."

"With Abeille?"—said she, shrugging her shoulders.

"With Mademoiselle Lareynie," persisted Hippolyte; "with *his* daughter," said he, pointing in the direction of the impatient old beau. "Judge then whether it be possible to talk to you in his presence, and whether I were not right to insist on a private interview!"—

At this precise and clear explanation Madame Dupastel experienced as much disappointment as the child who beholds the premature overthrow of the house of cards he was preparing to blow down.—With unmeaning coquetry, she regretted an opportunity of displaying the

power of her beauty, as well as the strength of her virtue. It was not without secret satisfaction that, for several days past, she had remarked the various manœuvres of the elegant young man, whose assiduities were the cause of such restless nights to her sexagenarian Lothario. She was prepared for a declaration, and intended to reprove the presumption of its author; but on receiving the confession for which she had prepared a burst of irony, suddenly metamorphosed into a revelation at which the most rigid prude could take no exception, she was more vexed than if the elegant Hippolyte had given her real cause of offence. Disappointed of playing the principal personage in this affair, she resolved to reject even that of confidante. Vanity, however, got the better of her vexation, dictating an answer through which a certain degree of incredulity was perceptible,

"With Mademoiselle Lareynie?" said she. "I see nothing that ought to displease her father in the avowal of your love for a child."

"A child of twenty-two, Madam,"—retorted Randeuil.

"Twenty-two?" exclaimed Madame Dupastel, "you must be dreaming! The Colonel always speaks of her as a school-girl!"

"How can you expect, Madam, that the Colonel, with his painted eye-brows, and juvenile pretensions, should confess before you that he has a daughter who ought to be at the head of his establishment, instead of being shut up in a boarding-school to favour his affectation of juvenility. A mere child indeed! He would doubtless, replace her in her cradle, if he could."

"Pray favour me with the sequel of the romance," said Ermance, laughing. "I am prepared to hear that, independent of the interest attached to all victims of paternal despotism, your heroine is a prodigy of grace and beauty."

"You may judge for yourself; since it is for *her* I come to solicit your gracious protection."

"Explain yourself, pray," said Madame Dupastel fretfully. "Do you not see that I am

dying of impatience, while these phrases of yours tell me less than nothing."

Keeping his eye on the door to ascertain that no one was listening, Randeuil resumed in a lower voice,

"As I have already mentioned, Madam," said he, "Monsieur Lareynie, in order to get rid of his daughter, has left her at school at an age when the education of young ladies leaves nothing further to desire. In an establishment at Chaillot, where one of my sisters is also pursuing her studies, I made the acquaintance of Mademoiselle Lareynie, whom to see is to love. Her beauty, her amiability, the slavery to which I saw her condemned, soon inspired me with the most sincere and ardent attachment; which, in spite of myself, unforeseen circumstances have seemed to render questionable. My conduct has been marked by the utmost propriety and respect. From the moment I discovered by the expression of Abeille's countenance, that she

both understood and forgave me, I addressed her a proposal in marriage, the success of which appeared but little doubtful. It is not vain presumption which prompts me to speak thus; for, even according to the interested calculations of the world, I was at least a suitable match. My fortune, position, and although I say it, my character, merit some consideration. A rational man would have accepted my demand, or at least reflected upon my proposition. But Monsieur Lareynie at once rejected it, and I had scarcely made known my pretentions, when he unceremoniously signified to me to withdraw them. Others have been as uncourteously treated; so that I have no grounds to resent a personal humiliation. Monsieur Lareynie finds the honors of paternity insupportable, and is still more in awe of those of a grandfather. In his estimation, therefore, a son-in-law is an enemy! His boundless admiration of you, Madam, if one may believe the report of the world, is only too

natural to cause surprise; but between this second marriage, which is the fond hope of Monsieur Lareynie, and the establishment of his daughter, there exists no absolute incompatibility. Is it because his own prospects brighten, that he is to condemn his child to perpetual celibacy?—I cannot think it, Madam, and trust you are of my opinion."

"I agree with you," exclaimed Ermance, "that to prevent the reasonable marriage of a daughter is worse than a folly—it is a crime. But proceed!"

"His refusal vexed, but did not discourage me. I felt that against injustice, any step became justifiable. From that moment, I resorted to various devices affording me a fair advantage.—Letters, stratagems, in a word, every folly from which the sincerity of my passion had preserved me, was now attempted. By degrees, Abeille shared in the spirit of revolt suggested by the selfishness of her father. I even explained to her that there

was a bold, but infallible step by which she could frustrate paternal despotism. Alas! Madam, I even persuaded her to a desperate extremity."

"You persuaded her, in short, to elope with you?" exclaimed Madame Dupastel, impatient to learn the truth.

At this involuntary outburst, Monsieur Lareynie, no longer able to contain himself, rushed into the room.

"You called me, Madam?" said he in a loud voice, advancing impetuously between them.

This ill-timed interruption roused the presence of mind of Madame Dupastel.

"You are mistaken, Colonel," replied she, calmly. "I entreat you to return a moment to the drawing-room."

"Madam!"

"I entreat you," she persisted—with a look of authority—"It appears—it appears to me that you had better comply."

"Doubtless!—but——"

"Here, or there!" said Madame Dupastel, pointing successively to the door of the drawing-room, and to the outward door.

Monsieur Lareynie raised his eyes towards the ceiling, while his arms stiffened to his sides, with his hands grasped convulsively. Then turning away like a wounded lion, he re-entered the drawing-room, of which Ermance now closed the door.

"I have guessed right," said she, advancing towards Randeuil, "have I not?"

"You have, Madam," replied Hippolyte, with a contrite air; "but for God's sake, condemn me not without a hearing."

"An elopement!—what madness!—But lose not your time in useless details."

"The catastrophe might have been avoided, had you, Madam, exerted that influence to which Monsieur Lareynie has nothing to refuse. But how can we even now engage your support? By what right, can we claim your benevolence?—Stranger, as I am, I

dared not even knock at your door. My efforts to attract your attention could only prove abortive, or be ill interpreted. I tried, however, but in vain. You were never alone, and he who was ever in your company, was the person I was compelled to avoid. Last night at the Opera, had it been possible to approach you, a few words from your lips would have prevented my rash proceeding of this morning."

"It was only this morning then, that this event took place?—Where then is Abeille?"

"For several days past, all had been prepared for our project. Abeille found means to elude the vigilance of her guardians, a carriage was in waiting, and we intended to take the road to Brussels. She wept bitterly, poor child! and at the sight of her tears, the feverish excitement, in which I had been some time living, began to subside. Romance gave way to reality; and for the first time, the consequences of my imprudence presented themselves

before me in their true light. An elopement! —her father's curse!—what preliminaries for a marriage! I know not what mysterious voice whispered, that, under such auspices, happiness must be impossible. My parents had taught *me* respect and submission. Monsieur Lareynie had a right to exact the same sentiments from his daughter. What was I then, but a vile and dastardly seducer? Convinced of my delinquency, before it became irreparable, I had but one step to take. Instead of continuing my road, I returned to Paris. But now that we are here, what is to become of us? If I take Abeille back to school, would they receive her?—If I take her elsewhere, to my home for instance, her reputation is lost. In this extremity, Madam, I bethought me of you, who bear the name of being so indulgent, so charitable. To whom better confide my future wife, than to her who will shortly possess a legal authority over her? *Your* in-

terference alone can redeem my error, and silence the calumnies she has to fear. Say, I entreat you, whether I presume too much upon your goodness; or rather tell me that from this moment you will become the guardian angel of Abeille!—My most fervent desire is that you become her mother!"

With the exception of the last hint, signifying in reality mother in law, Madame Dupastel was pleased by a confession, the imprudence of which was a tribute to her generosity of character. The part of a protectress seemed to her, at that moment, more attractive and novel than that of a coquette.

"You have judged me rightly, Sir," replied she. "I will not betray your confidence. Dispose of me, though I confess myself little experienced in such matters; and that I scarcely know how to act under such circumstances towards a school girl of twenty-two. I shall make amends for my inexperience by sincere

good will. Above all, Mademoiselle Lareynie must return to school. Where is she at this moment?"

"Close at hand, at the angle of the Place de Louis XV."

"You have left her in the street?—Have you lost your senses?"

"Nearly, Madam. After dismissing my travelling carriage, I could think of nothing better than to engage a hackney coach. I at first intended to bring Abeille here; but did not dare, without previously addressing you. I do not repent my precaution."

"To own the truth, the Colonel has a hasty temper, and the thing might have ended tragically. You said, I think, at the angle of the Place Louis XV?"

"Yes, Madam,—a brown carriage,—No. 157.

"Good!"—said Ermance; "the rest is my affair. Before an hour has elapsed, the truant

shall be safe in her cage, and we will decide what is to be done for the future."

"Do you imagine that Madame Dunois, the school-mistress, will make no difficulty?" demanded Randeuil.

Ermance shrugged her shoulders.

"I cannot promise you that they will slay the fatted calf, to celebrate the return of the prodigal; but you may be sure that the worthy woman will not shut the door she so carelessly left open this morning. The reputation of her house will ensure her silence. There is not a moment to be lost. The poor girl must be suffering martyrdom in the vehicle in which you have left her alone. I will hasten and deliver her. During my absence, remain and pay your respects to Monsieur Lareynie. Remember that your marriage depends upon him, and if you conduct yourself rationally for the future, I promise not to own that you have called him egotist, despot, unnatural father, and what

he will be still less likely to pardon,—an old beau!"

She now opened the drawing-room door, so abruptly, that Monsieur Lareynie, who was at the moment indulging in a most lackey-like curiosity, had scarcely time to rise from applying his eye to the key-hole. Without even looking at the aged dandy, who blushed like a child at being found in such an attitude, Madame Dupastel crossed the room, entered her bed-chamber, put on her hat and pelisse, snatched an approving look in the glass; and seeing herself so pretty, was only the better disposed for the good action she was about to accomplish.

Hurrying down the back stairs, she left her two visitors in possession of the field.

CHAPTER IV.

RANDEUIL remained in the dining-room, where he waited the return of Ermance, while the Colonel, recovered from his agitation, returned to his place before the fire; his brows knit, his chin sunk into his cravat, and his arms folded over his chest, while he whistled a charge of the imperial guard, to the sound of which he had more than once passed over the ranks of the Russians and Austrians. Thus they remained for some time, eyeing each other askance, like two armies, mutually observing each other previous to an attack. At last, having eyed the clock several times, Monsieur Lareynie, worn out by impatience and ill temper, pulled the bell rope with the most

disastrous violence. On hearing the noise, the lady's maid hastened to obey the summons, astonished at the exercise of such an act of authority.

"He might as well wait till he is married," thought she, "before he takes the liberty of tearing down our bell ropes."

"Madame Dupastel is busy in her room, I suppose?" he dryly inquired.

"Madame has been out this half hour," replied she, in the same tone.

"Gone out?" exclaimed the Colonel.

"Gone out?" repeated Hippolyte.

"Gone out!" persisted the maid. "Did you not know it, gentlemen?"

"Know it indeed? No! But since your mistress is gone, you are at liberty to follow her!" cried Lareynie, in a voice that shook the room.

"What is the matter with the old fool!" —muttered the femme-de-chambre, with a compassionate glance towards Hippolyte.

"If it were yonder handsome young fellow, who were about to become my master!" said she, closing the door.

Alone with his imaginary rival, Monsieur Lareynie surveyed him from head to foot.

"Sir," said he, with affected coolness, "till now, the respect due to a woman's presence has forced me to silence. Now we are alone, and can discuss the matter freely, my conduct shall be open, and I expect on your side equal frankness. My sentiments for Madame Dupastel cannot be unknown to you. The report of our marriage is notorious in the circle in which we live. In fact, I have the most fervent hope and desire to become her husband. You know it, do you not? Answer me briefly, yes or no!"

"I have indeed heard of your intended marriage," replied Randeuil, unable to comprehend the drift of this proceeding.

"It is more than a mere project, Sir. There is a formal promise, a sacred engagement on

both sides, which confers on me legitimate rights, such as I shall enforce with regard to you, as well as others. I look upon this house as my home, Sir; and beg to know the purpose of your visit, as much as if you were in reality my guest."

"Sir," said the young man, in a most courteous tone, "another in my place might question the rights you assert; but which to others appear far from incontestable. As to me, I will not refuse to acknowledge as well as act upon your claim; and declare to you, upon my honour, that my presence here has no object at which your affection for Madame Dupastel need take exception."

"You can have no possible reason, then, for not explaining your motive," said the Colonel.

"I have no particular reason for refusing to satisfy you," replied Randeuil. "But the importance you attach to a visit most innocent in its object, makes me think the intervention of

Madame Dupastel more than necessary. From the moment her name figures in a discussion, it would be indecorous to continue it without her presence. Meanwhile, I am able to afford you considerable proof of the purity of my intentions. Some time ago, Sir, I had the honour to address you a proposition, the favourable result of which would have gratified my most sanguine wishes. Your ungracious rejection of my offer almost broke my heart, though it did not extinguish my hopes. *My* feelings are not changed, and you might cause me to fall at your feet, the happiest of men. What can I say more, Sir? Surely you will admit that my heart, engrossed by the image of your daughter, cannot entertain a hope to give you umbrage!"

With difficulty did the old beau suppress his indignation.

"This is just what I expected!" exclaimed he. "I felt sure that the name of my daughter would enter into this discussion, though she

have nothing to do with the matter. Do you suppose that I am to be deceived by such sentimental protestations?—by phrases filched from novels? Of course I am aware that you would do Mademoiselle Lareynie the honour of marrying her! My daughter is rich, beautiful, well educated (for, though I say it, nothing has been neglected in her education). I can conceive that such a marriage may appear desirable to you. But my views remain unaltered."

Monsieur Lareynie pulled up on either of his parchment cheeks the two corners of his shirt collar to conceal the corners of his mouth, dilated by a contemptuous smile.

Randeuil began again to remonstrate.

"Oh! I perfectly understand your projects, Sir," exclaimed the old beau. "You want to become my son-in-law, because the match is by no means despicable; and you wish to make yourself acceptable to Madame Dupastel—a conquest calculated to do you some honour

in the world; a double game not uncommon now a days, in which vanity and interest are harmoniously combined, without regard to the honesty or affection."

"Nay, Sir," exclaimed Randeuil, eagerly, "you have no right to accuse me of calculations so contemptible!"

"Contemptible indeed!" replied the old beau. "But you cannot suppose that I shall further your views, or lend a hand to your base designs. I give you my daughter? *My* daughter?" exclaimed the Colonel, raising his voice. "Entrust you with the welfare, happiness, existence of my child, my only child? Introduce you into my house, my family, after what happened only yesterday, after what I have witnessed, when hundreds of persons have remarked the perseverance with which, in public and in private, you have followed the lady I mean to marry. You must take me for an idiot, Sir. You must think me blind, Sir! You must fancy I have neither blood in my veins, nor

feeling in my soul! But *you insult me!*" exclaimed the Colonel in a voice as if still at the head of a regiment of cuirassiers.

"Stupid, obstinate old ass!" was Hippolyte's inward reflection; "were it not for my adoration of Abeille, what pleasure should I have in affording you real ground for jealousy."

"Let us make an end of this;" resumed Monsieur Lareynie, in a calm and serious tone, contrasting singularly with the ebullition of temper in which he had just indulged.

"Our discussion comprises two points, requiring a prompt and decisive solution. As to the first, which regards my daughter, for the second and last time I refuse you her hand. That I never intend to have the honour of being your father-in-law, I trust my words have made sufficiently clear to your comprehension."

Instead of answering, Randeuil was intensely repenting his delicacy of the morning.

"Oh, that I were still on the road to Brus-

sels!" thought he, "this surly old monster should adopt another tone."

The Colonel now drew himself up, as if to give greater importance to the words he was about to utter.

"Let us proceed to the second point," said he; "the only one which is material, for after my preceding refusal, you must allow me to look upon your pertinacity as of questionable taste. Listen to me attentively. In marrying Madame Dupastel, I am fully alive to the consequences of such an alliance. In the world, the position of a husband at my time of life, is an endless struggle. Such a destiny I contemplate, but I will triumph or die in the cause. Yes, Sir, die!" gravely repeated the enamoured old gentleman, by way of rebuke to the sneer pourtrayed on the countenance of Hippolyte. "My words may appear strange; but I swear to you, my honour shall be respected. When Madame Dupastel shall bear my name, more than one man perhaps will play

the part you have this day attempted; each of whom I shall regard as my mortal enemy, and treat as such;—that is to say, one of us must cease to live."

In spite of his disappointment, Randeuil could not refrain from admiring the energetic expression suddenly reviving the withered features of the old officer. Over all the ridicule of amorous old age, the proud veteran of the imperial army still predominated.

"The events of to-day convince me that the combat may begin even before my marriage," continued Monsieur Lareynie, with a resignation worthy of a fatalist. "You have thrown down the gauntlet, Sir. I accept the defiance, and confess myself offended by your conduct. I must have satisfaction, unless you pledge me your honour that, from this moment, you resign your pretensions."

At this unexpected provocation, Randeuil stood confounded.

"Is it a duel you propose, Sir?" said he, unable to conceal his surprise.

"Yes, Sir—a duel," replied the old man, coolly.

"And you think I would consent to fight you?"

"I have no reason for doubting your courage."

"You forget the respect due to your age."

"My age only regards myself," answered the old officer, dryly; "and since I choose to forget it, it would be a further impertinence to remind me of it."

"If you do not see yourself, Sir, I do," observed Randeuil, becoming also irritable. "I will not render myself ridiculous by fighting with a man who, though he refuse to be my father-in-law, might be my grandfather."

"You will compel me, then, to chastise you

in public," exclaimed the old Colonel, wounded to the quick.

Hippolyte, losing his patience, threw himself abruptly on the sofa.

"What are your weapons?" inquired M. Lareynie, after a brief pause.

"Crutches!" exclaimed Randeuil, greatly exasperated.

"Take care that I do not give you cause for wearing them!" retorted the irate old man, with the self-assurance of one certain of his aim. "I sprained my arm out shooting lately," (such was his version of a violent attack of rheumatism, which no power on earth could make him call by its right name); "I therefore find it difficult to use a sword, so that if you have objections to make against pistols—"

"My objections are against fighting you on any terms," interrupted Randeuil, rising impatiently. "How am I to undeceive your

unfounded suspicions and obtain peace? You talked of oaths—of solemn attestations; I am ready to comply with all you may exact."

"Swear, then, that you do not love Madame Dupastel," replied the jealous man, looking daggers at Hippolyte.

"I *do* swear that I neither love her, nor ever have, nor ever will love her. What more do you require?"

"That you will not attempt to see her again, to speak with her, or approach her."

"Since I have given you my word of honour that I do not love Madame Dupastel," replied Randeuil, eluding the question, "what need of this?"

In spite of his jealousy, the old man felt almost convinced by these reiterated and unhesitating protestations.

"A word of honour is a serious pledge," said he, "and I am not entitled to reject your's. Rather let me believe myself mis-

taken. I, therefore, withdraw the words at which you have taken umbrage. Your future conduct will give the law to mine."

"In what sense am I to understand that phrase?" eagerly inquired the young man. "May I interpret it in my favour? Am I to hope that, by dint of submission to your wishes, I may at last succeed?"

"As regards the hand of my daughter," said the Colonel, cutting him short, "obstinate as you may be in your projects, I am not less so in my decision. Do not compel me to the ungracious task of a third time refusing your proposals. After all that has passed, you have less chance than ever of becoming my son-in-law."

At that moment, the drawing-room door was thrown open, and Madame Dupastel, carefully enveloped in her pelisse, her cheeks mantling with the cold, stepped lightly into the room. Advancing towards the fire, she stood shivering between the two men, who

stepped aside to make way for her; then, with a series of rapid and scarcely perceptible movements, surveyed her fair disordered ringlets in the glass, rolled them adroitly round her slender fingers, smiled graciously upon Monsieur Lareynie, to whose hands she confided the elegant bonnet she had just taken off, signifying meanwhile by a rapid glance to Hippolyte, that all was safe.

A moment afterwards, the old beau, in the full discharge of his functions, received the pelisse, as he had already received the bonnet, and placed it carefully on the ottoman, disposing of both with as much veneration as if they had been sacred relics; while Ermance, taking advantage of the opportunity, whispered to Hippolyte, in stooping, to ring the bell:

"To-morrow, at two o'clock!"

Inspired by the peculiar instinct of jealousy, the old man turned quickly round, although he heard nothing. Madame Dupastel was seated on the sofa, at the angle of the fire-

place, disarranging the fire, which, the minute before, had been carefully renewed; while Hippolyte stood with his hat in hand, in the attitude of a man about to depart. In spite of the affected calmness of both, Monsieur Lareynie experienced a vague anxiety inexpressibly painful.

"You went out on foot, then, Madam?" said he, seeing an almost imperceptible splash at the bottom of her gown.

"On foot, and a famous march I have had. Your old grenadiers could not have stepped out better. I secured, at least, one advantage. I saw the bills of the Opera; they have substituted Otello for Norma, which has completely changed my plans for the evening. Bellini is the rage, I admit; but I am unshaken in my musical faith. I really must persuade my aunt to come. Will you join us?"

The conversation, thus skilfully merged in common-place, continued some minutes; at

the expiration of which, Randeuil respectfully took leave of the lady of the house, and exchanged a cold salutation with the man who disdained him as a son-in-law.

"Now we are alone, Madam, do me the favour to inform me what was the object of that young man's visit?" said Monsieur Lareynie.

"Did he not tell you then?" said Madame Dupastel, with a smile. "Of what can you have been talking for these last two hours?"

"Betwixt man and man, there are certain explanations which never take place in a lady's drawing room."

"My dear Colonel," retorted Madame Dupastel, "I am no great heroine, and if you draw your imperial sword from its scabbard, shall take the liberty to beat a retreat." Rising from her seat, and humming a military air, she proceeded towards the piano.

"You refuse me then the word that would restore me to ease of mind?" said the old man

following her as if in leading-strings, and adopting a tone of supplication. Ermance contemplating him the while with an expression of mingled kindness, irony, pity, and impatience.

"We will see about it," said she, in the caressing tone with which one soothes a child. "You shall know all, if you are a good boy. But in the first place, you have to ask my pardon for having forgotten yourself."

Madame Dupastel was now seated on the music stool before the piano. Subdued by her winning expression of countenance, and the magic of her voice, the Colonel fell at her feet, regardless of the want of elasticity in the calves of a sexagenarian.

"I forgive you," said she, trying to extricate her hand from the grasp of the old man, who was about to raise it to his lips; and in order to terminate a scene becoming so ridiculously tender, she rose without ceremony, leaving the old man fixed in his supremely critical genuflection. "It is near five o'clock," added

she, looking at the clock, "I must dress, I dine with my aunt. If you mean to be amiable, you will come and take me to the Opera."

"At seven I will be with you," said the Colonel, making a convulsive effort to get upon his legs.

"Farewell then till this evening," said Ermance, "and till then, heaven have you in its holy keeping. Adieu."

With infantine grace, she made a solemn curtsey to the old beau, worthy of the court of Louis XIV, and disappeared under the silken curtain over-hanging the door. For a moment Monsieur Lareynie stood motionless in the centre of the room, as if his feet had taken root to the carpet; then rushed towards the sofa and pressed his lips to the hem of her pelisse.

"Dear, fatally dear, and most capricious woman!" cried he, with a last glance towards the door through which she had disappeared. "You are fated to be the bane of my remaining years!"

CHAPTER V.

NEXT day, at two o'clock, Hippolyte Randeuil proceeded to the house of Madame Dupastel, whom he found alone, with a book in her hand and comfortably seated by the chimney corner. After a profound obeisance, he anxiously surveyed the room, in a manner that did not escape the quick observation of Ermance.

"Do not alarm yourself," said she, "he is not here."

"You have guessed right, Madam," replied Hippolyte, accepting the arm-chair graciously pointed out to him. "I cannot conceal from you, that the presence of Monsieur Lareynie makes me tremble."

"Do you suppose I allow him to come here

every day? Every Friday, for instance, which is to-day, I close my doors and receive no one; the exception in your favour is the result of peculiar circumstances. Let me now give you an account of my mission. In the first place, the lady of your thoughts is decidedly handsome; she has fine eyes, good features, a pleasant expression of countenance. No great display of physiognomy, perhaps, but upon the whole, a charming person. You are a man of taste; and I will accept such beautiful eyes as an excuse for imprudence. I will not dwell upon the alarm of Mademoiselle Lareynie, when, expecting you, she saw me arrive in your place; she must have thought me as hideous as I thought her pretty. I succeeded, however, in making her understand that her sentimental journey was at an end, and that she must speedily return to school. At Chaillot, all was settled according to my expectations. Madame Dunois will be prudent enough to hold her tongue; so that part of the business is arranged.

And now, pray, what have *you* effected? I did not dare question Monsieur Lareynie yesterday; but have you obtained no concession on his part?"

"He has obligingly relinquished the idea Madam, of cutting my throat on your account, but nothing more. As to the marriage, it is more distasteful to him than ever; and you behold a man who has undergone three several rejections at his hands."

"Cut your throat?" exclaimed Madame Dupastel. "What extraordinary ideas must he entertain about you. I trust you have done all in your power to undeceive him?"

"Assuredly, Madam. But how is one to reason with the frenzy of jealousy?"

"You made him understand, I hope, that you had never entertained the slightest pretensions to pleased me, or to interest my feelings?"

"Alas, Madam, I own I was vile enough to utter blasphemies to that effect. Last night,

in recalling the events of the day, I felt conscious that I had acted like a child!"

"How so?"

"Instead of concealing my game, I stupidly threw down the cards before Monsieur Lareynie. I read in your eyes, Madam, that you understand me!"

"I am afraid I do," said Madame Dupastel, laughing;—"but proceed."

"You are as well aware as myself, Madam," replied Hippolyte, "that men are only governed by their passions. The leading one of Monsieur Lareynie is devotion to yourself. To this exclusive sentiment, all other feelings have yielded; and the rest of the world, including his daughter, are perfectly indifferent to him; such being the case, how should I have acted? Addressed myself to this delicate chord, and direct my attack against the only vulnerable point! Fearing me as a rival, Monsieur Lareynie would, sooner or later, have given me the hand of his daughter in order to get rid of me."

"You think so?"

"I am sure of it; the jealousy of Monsieur Lareynie was an offered means of salvation, and my neglect of the advantage appears perfectly unaccountable. There are days on which one's intelligence sinks beneath the instinct of the meanest animal! What has been the consequence? Monsieur Lareynie entertains no further anxiety. I have lost my cause by my own irreparable folly."

"Irreparable indeed!" exclaimed Ermance with affected gravity. Randeuil hesitated for a moment; but perceiving a slight smile upon the lip of his charming protectress, like the summer breeze that shakes the leaves of the honeysuckle, resumed in an insinuating voice:

"Irreparable, Madam, I repeat; unless you deign to repair my fault."

"What means these mysterious insinuations?" replied Ermance. "Yesterday, you sent me off to Chaillot in the service of your

love. Whither is it your pleasure I should go to-day? Do not, however, expect me to quit my fireside. I prefer resigning my functions as protectress."

"I refuse your resignation, Madam," replied Randeuil, in the same tone. "What would become of me, were you to abandon me? I entreat you, vouchsafe the continuance of your good will! What I ask, would cost you so little!"

"What is it you require?"

"Your permission to justify, henceforward, by my pretensions, the feeling with which Monsieur Lareynie thinks proper to honour me."

"Excellent!" interrupted Madame Dupastel, laughing immoderately. "You ought to write for the stage. You have a decided genius for dramatic intrigue. Yesterday, an elopement, and now a mystification. And what part, pray, do you design for me?—I trust I am not to be a walking lady?"

"You shall retain the part you play so ad-

mirably well," replied Randeuil, joining in the gaiety of Madame Dupastel.

"I am an actress, then, without knowing it? Tell me in what part?"

"That of a woman who pleases every one so wholly without effort, that it is not *her* fault if all the world be in love with her!"

Reclining against the back of the sofa, and holding in her tiny hand the point of her dimpled chin, Madame Dupastel fixed her dark eyes upon the admirer of Mademoiselle Lareynie.

"I am more inclined to laugh than scold," said she, after a moment's pause. "I must candidly confess to you my displeasure at your extravagant ideas. Marriage is too serious a thing to be trifled with."

"I am willing to be serious if you prefer it," said Randeuil, gravely.

"No, no; if you love me at all, be it in joke. Other women might, perhaps, regard the proposition as an impertinence; but in matters of love, *I* prefer the parody to the drama."

"Angel that you are!" exclaimed Hippolyte, with involuntary enthusiasm.

"Not badly done for a first attempt;" observed Ermance; "but remember, the play is not yet begun. If you prove a tolerable actor, I should think a week might suffice for our plot."

"Be generous, and give me a month," said Randeuil, eagerly.

"A month? do you want to *kill* the poor old Colonel?—My conscience will only allow me to grant what is strictly necessary. A fortnight must suffice. For fifteen days, you are free to torment the Colonel, to the utmost in your power, with the exception of an elopement, for which I do not share the predilection of his daughter. After that period, should you not succeed, you must permit me to withdraw from the scene of action."

Hippolyte could scarcely suppress his resentment at this indirect censure upon the conduct of Mademoiselle Lareynie.

"Coquette!" muttered he between his lips. "It is not from kindness she renders me this service, but merely for the sake of teazing the old Celadon, who, in the bottom of her soul, I am sure she detests. There is something in her eyes, beautiful as they are, which make me dread her as a mother-in-law. However, if she promote my marriage, I have no right to find fault!"

Madame Dupastel looked askance at the young man during his momentary silence. With the intuitiveness of quick intelligence, she partly guessed the ironical reflection of which she was the object; and this discovery produced a smile, of which the melancholy expression, possessed the eloquence of an unexpected charm.

"Be frank with me!" said she. "Just now, you called me angel; and now you seem disposed to give me another name, and that too, for an idle word that unwittingly escaped my lips. I had no intention of wounding your

feelings or disparaging your idol. While praising my goodness, I see you think me treacherous, and attribute to a caprice, which would be almost a cruelty, my conduct towards Monsieur Lareynie. Do not interrupt me," said she, with eagerness; "you are young, and I have known you but a day. By so readily assenting to your extraordinary project, I have proved that you inspire me with feelings of esteem and regard. Your proceeding yesterday, your self-government after so reprehensible a commencement, appeared to me a proof of excellent feelings. On my part, I should be sorry to have you entertain an unfavourable impression of me. If we enter the same family, I shall be your mother-in-law, but it would be painful to me to owe your respect only to that title. Having received your confession, I feel, I know not why, the strongest inclination to make you *mine*. Were you only thirty years older—"

"Since yesterday, Madam," gravely inter-

rupted Randeuil, "my head has put forth several grey hairs."

"I do not perceive them, though willing to believe it," replied Madame Dupastel, laughing. "My scruples, however, are diminished. Listen, therefore, and make what excuses for me you can. On seeing me about to give my hand to Lareynie, you probably felt surprised that, in a second marriage, I should not have desired a more suitable alliance in point of age?"

"I confess, Madam, that the happiness destined for Monsieur Lareynie seems somewhat inexplicable!"

"Suffer me to explain it. In contracting this marriage, I do not yield to the considerations which usually induce young women to marry men considerably older than themselves. My fortune is equal to that of the Colonel; and the advantage, indeed, on my side, having no daughter to establish. It is not, therefore, interest, but prudence, which influences my choice. I was far from happy with my *first*

husband. Monsieur Dupastel was very young, of about my own age. Experience taught me to regard this as a misfortune. In the world, I am pronounced a coquette; yet the natural bent of my character inclines me towards genuine and simple feelings; and though in appearance frivolous, my object is to attain happiness from a tranquil life. Monsieur Dupastel, not participating in my tastes, forced me to adopt his own. His age, for I only accuse his age, attracted him into the world, the pleasures and triumphs, of which were essential to him. What I suffered during three empty, dissipated years, my anxiety, my jealousy, nay, why should I not confess it? the tears I have often shed upon leaving a scene of gaiety, it were useless to describe. My assumed coquetry dates from that period. Women often smile the better to disguise their tears. I became a coquette from pride; but my hours of solitude were only the more dreary from temporary gaiety. On becoming a widow,

I swore to retain my freedom; but the disadvantage of being without a protector, exposed to ridiculous and irksome persecution, finally overcame my resolution. My family urged me to marry again; and, while thus beset, Monsieur Lareynie, the intimate friend of my aunt, made me an overture of marriage, which in the first instance provoked my smiles, but at length made me serious. His age, which would have caused others to hesitate, was precisely his recommendation to my favour. Experience determined me to seek in a future alliance, the certainty of peace rather than chances of happiness too often illusory. Monsieur Lareynie's time of life affords the guarantees I require. My affection will suffice him. His peculiarities of character do not alarm me. After all, it is better to be the cause of jealousy, than the victim! Indeed, with the exception of a few trifling failings, perfectly supportable, the Colonel is a man of excellent qualities. His honour and probity are beyond

all praise. He has mind, information, is courteous, amiable, and above all deeply attached to me. In that respect, I have been too little spoiled to remain indifferent to the intense affection he has conceived for me. On one point, alone—his apparent indifference for his daughter—am I disposed to blame him. But I hope to persuade him into kindlier feelings. Such, Sir, is my confession. If just now, I unintentionally offended you, you are free to pay back again, by your condemnation."

"Since you can penetrate my inward heart, Madam, you must see how I repent having, for an instant, doubted your generosity," cried Randeuil. "Do you pardon me?"

As the young man was about to rise from his chair, to reiterate the inquiry, there was a ring at the bell.

"Here is Monsieur Lareynie!" exclaimed Ermance, somewhat agitated.

"Are you sure?" inquired Hippolyte.

"*Too* sure. I know his ring full well. He

was not to have come to-day! *What* will he say at seeing you!"

"There will only be a repetition of the scene of yesterday!"

"No, no! I will not have it. Sit down. He is already in the dining-room."

The young man instantly seized her hand.

"The opportunity is only too favourable," said he; and, unmindful of her commands, he fell on his knees before her, at the moment the door flew open.

Affecting the confusion of a discovered suitor, he started up; but not so as to prevent the intruder from obtaining a full view of his movements.

served to exasperate him the more. Again, he attempted to rise; but without giving him time, Ermance leant rapidly towards her confederate.

"You will kill him, if you persist," whispered she. "Never have I seen him in such a state. In the name of heaven leave us! For this time, I hope you have done enough!"

Randeuil hesitated, but, considering that by going too far he might injure his project, he bowed graciously to his protectress, and left the room.

After his departure, Madame Dupastel was as much agitated as if the scene had not been one of excellent dissembling. She closed the piano, threw the books about, as if to put them in order, arranged the fire, which had no need of arrangement; and having exhausted these little subterfuges, seated herself on the sofa.

"How do you find yourself, now, Colonel?" said she, looking affectionately upon Monsieur

Lareynie; who, during the time had maintained the most profound silence.

The old man raised his eyes, and contemplated his idol with a downcast air.

"Those who stab a man to the heart with a dagger," said he, in a feeble voice, "do not usually ask him how he finds himself."

The sadness with which these words were pronounced, produced more effect than the utmost bitterness or anger. The agitated features of Monsieur Lareynie, who during the last few minutes seemed to have grown older by several years, so convulsed was his countenance, so indistinct and hoarse his voice, inspired Ermance with a degree of compassion bordering upon repentance.

"Poor fellow!" said she. "He loves me more than I thought. Do you suffer much?" she inquired, in a tone of deep affection.

Monsieur Lareynie rose with an air of profound solemnity, like a culprit about to undergo his sentence.

"It is here that I suffer!" said he, laying his hand on his heart; "Ermance! you, whom I adore, you who possess my whole affection, and esteem, you, to deceive me thus—to betray me!—At *my* age, such a wound is death!"—

It was the first time the Colonel had alluded to his age; and the avowal impressed her with shame, for the deep injury she had inflicted on the heart of her future husband.

"To talk in this style," thought she, "he must feel the approach of death!"

Of the few real victims of their affections, those in the decline of years are certainly most in danger. Unrequited love expands upon a youthful organization like oil upon the polished marble; but in that which is more mature, it finds a thousand crevices by which the corrosive poison instils itself into the heart. Convinced of this, Ermance felt a sudden remorse, and began to repent the promise made to Randeuil. She saw only her aged admirer standing before her, his hand pressed upon his

heart, as if to staunch his wound; his cheeks so pale, his eyes so sunk, his brow so wrinkled, his bearing so enfeebled, that she feared he would sink exhausted on the carpet. To avoid such a catastrophe, she made way for him on the sofa, a favour he had never yet obtained, desiring him to remain by her, with the most copmassionate and earnest persuasions.

"My dear friend!" said she, "be reasonable. Let us argue calmly. Your jealousy has not a shadow of foundation. You are completely in the wrong."

"Wrong?" exclaimed he.

"You have taken for earnest a comedy, I might say a tragedy, in which I regret having accepted a part, seeing the deplorable effect which has resulted!" said Ermance, kindly. "The scene you witnessed, on entering, was preconcerted between Monsieur Randeuil and me. He loves your daughter, he wishes to marry her; in furtherance of which, he claims my influence. Your reiterated refusals have left

little hope to the poor young man; and in order to force you to revoke your decision, we thought of nothing better than to take advantage of your attachment for me. It was a stupid stratagem, I allow, and for the part I took in it, I sincerely beg your pardon. One should never trifle with feelings genuine as yours; and in all things, the straightest road is the shortest. Fortunately, the grievance is not irreparable. On this occasion, every body is to blame: you the first, Colonel. Between ourselves, your opposition to the marriage of your daughter is unwarrantable. The world, ever severe with respect to step-mothers, will suppose that *I* am the cause. I do not choose to pay the penalty of your errors. If you mean me to pardon the ridiculous suspicions which you presumed to entertain before my explanation, you must promise to grant the hand of your daughter to Monsieur Randeuil. He is worthy of her; he is a young man of honour and refinement. The two weddings

shall take place on the same day. You must give her a handsome fortune, for I will not suffer the interests of your daughter to be prejudiced by our marriage. Then, all will be well. Your children will bless you, and your wife approve. Come, Adolphe!—Give me your hand and say yes!"

The word "Adolphe," was a talisman which Madame Dupastel reserved for extreme occasions; and which Monsieur Lareynie found irresistible. Like all old men with youthful pretensions, he retained a childish attachment to his christian name. This time, however, the cabalistic expression failed in its effect, so completely had the foul fiend of jealousy envenomed the tender heart of the veteran.

"Madam, madam!" exclaimed he bitterly; "spare me a justification I do not demand. I never doubted the resources of your imagination; but can you suppose the best constructed plot ever imagined, capable of making me disbelieve the evidence of my eyes? Jealousy

is not so blind as is supposed. It sees exceedingly clear. Do not, therefore, try to deceive me. I am no longer a child to believe in fables."

"I am fully aware that you are no longer a child," replied Ermance, mortified by his incredulity; "but reason may fail one at any age. When I choose to give you an explanation of my own free will, it appears to me that you ought to be more than convinced."

"Yes, *I am* convinced," said Monsieur Lareynie, in a tragical tone; "but it is of your perfidy—your insincerity—your treason!"

"A truce to such gallantry," replied Ermance, roused by the energy of the implacable old beau: "your words are too kind, too gracious. But they would be much enhanced were they more calmly delivered. You are not in a council of war; this is a lady's drawing-room, and not a field of battle."

"Would to God I *were* on a field of battle!" exclaimed the old soldier.

"With me for a foe?" said Ermance. "Your victory would be easy. I own myself dead beat."

She now rose from her seat with the air of a woman who deems her visitor tiresome. Disdaining to resent this mute rebuff, Monsieur Lareynie took up his hat and cane.

"Adieu, Madam!" said he, accompanying the words by a solemn look.

"Adieu, Colonel," replied Ermance, with an arch smile. "You will return when you are in better temper. Meantime, take care of yourself. At your age, violent emotions are sometimes fatal!"

"At my age, Madam," exclaimed the superannuated beau, "one is not too old to rid oneself of a coxcomb, or revenge oneself on a coquette!"

With this bitter retort, he quitted the room.

CHAPTER VII.

Next day, Hippolyte Randeuil was smoking quietly by the fireside, dreaming alternately of Abeille and Madame Dupastel, when his servant entered the room announcing, "General Thorignon." The young man immediately rose on hearing this title to respect; when lo! there entered a fine imposing old man, whose stately person was further enhanced by his soldierly bearing. His blue surtout buttoned close to the chin, had ribbons of several colours at one of the button holes; and his forehead, in addition to a few grey locks, was embellished with as handsome a scar as soldier could desire.

"Sir," said the General, after accepting the chair politely offered by Hippolyte, "I am

come to you on the part of my friend, Colonel Lareynie. You, no doubt, anticipate the object of my visit?"

Throwing his cigar into the fire, Hippolyte calmly replied, "My surmises, General, are so improbable, that, to be convinced, I require the authority of your word."

"I shall explain myself in a few words," said the old soldier. "An altercation has taken place between you and the Colonel, who wishes things to take their usual course, and insists that you appoint a day and hour for the meeting."

"Although you come hither as the friend of Monsieur Lareynie, Sir," replied Hippolyte, "allow me to beg you will arbitrate between us. Judge if it be possible for me to accept this challenge?"

"And why should it be impossible?" calmly inquired the plenipo.

"For many reasons, General, which you will readily appreciate. First of all, the Colonel's age."

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reason is inadmissible; le

"His infirmities!" said
matism in the right arm,
call a sprain."

"And pray, who has
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"What signifies that, Sir? A duel is a mark of respect. We do not fight with those whom we despise."

"General!" replied the young man driven back into his last retrenchment. "You cannot enter into my extreme repugnance to this meeting. The cause of our dispute is an act of folly. Is an arrangement impossible?"

"Sir," replied the veteran, "had there been a possibility of terminating this affair amicably, believe me, it would have been done. But my office is positive, and admits of no reconciliation. Give me a formal answer. Will you fight, or no?"

"No, then," replied Hippolyte. "I will *not*!"

"Neither I nor the Colonel could anticipate so absolute a refusal," said the General, astonished. "I must apply for further instructions. As soon as I have them, I will return."

The idea of receiving a second visit, during the day, from this messenger of war, did not

suit the projects of Randeuil, who tried to obtain a further delay.

"I require twenty-four hours' reflection," replied he; "at the expiration of which time, it is I who will have the honour of waiting upon you, for I cannot think of giving you the trouble to return."

"As you please," said the General, placing his card on the table; "here is my address. I shall expect you at two precisely."

As soon as the friend of Monsieur Lareynie departed, Randeuil dressed himself, and proceeded to Madame Dupastel's.

"Here again?" exclaimed the young widow, seeing him. "Are you going to take my room by storm, day after day?"

"Our position," said Hippolyte, "is becoming serious. If you do not interfere, I shall find myself forced to kill Monsieur Lareynie, or to let him kill me—a disagreeable alternative. I have obtained a delay of twenty-four hours."

"Such, then, is the catastrophe with which he threatened me, in going away yesterday? And so you are not inclined to fight?"

"Place yourself in my situation. It would be most disagreeable to be killed, above all by a person of that age; and if I have the misfortune to kill *him*, how present myself afterwards before Abeille?"

"The Cid before Chimène!" observed Madame Dupastel, with a smile, implying that she did not deem it a very serious matter.

"I implore you, my kind protectress, come to my aid," said he, gravely; "if not, I shall never extricate myself from this perplexing affair. Your redoubtable Colonel has just dispatched to me a formidable emissary—a General of the grand army, as ferocious as himself, and both seem thirsting for my blood."

"Good!" replied Ermance; "have you nothing more to say in your own favour?"

"Is it not enough to obtain your pity?"

"By no means enough, to excuse three visits in three days' time. I have no doubt the servants are already making their observations. Return home, remain there until you hear from me."

"Promise me you will not allow me to be killed!" said Randeuil, affecting a boyish fear.

"Not just yet—it would be a pity," replied Ermance, contemplating with satisfaction the manly and expressive physiognomy of her future son-in-law; and having thus despatched him, the young widow, without loss of time, wrote a laconic note, which was instantly forwarded to Monsieur Lareynie. An hour afterwards, the old beau, cited before a tribunal at which love-stricken hearts are enchanted to appear, entered the room with the determined air of one, who, foreseeing a mortal combat, is resolved to conquer or die.

CHAPTER VIII.

Since the preceding day, Madame Dupastel had repented having hazarded a shock to her old friend which his age might render fatal. She eyed him closely as he entered the room, and contrary to her expectations, found him but little altered. The possibility of a duel had reanimated the old warrior; who advanced with a firm and resolute air, his head erect, his shoulders squared. Observing this, her conscience became tranquillized; and as further compassion was superfluous, she returned without scruple to the exercise of her usual despotism.

"I beg pardon for having disturbed you," said she, coldly to the old gentleman, after he had seated himself. "I will not detain you

long, for I have only two words to say, I have just been informed that you have sent a challenge to Monsieur Randeuil."

"He was base enough to acquaint you of the fact?" exclaimed the Colonel.

"Rather *prudent* enough. It is necessary that young men be rational, when their seniors forget themselves. You are the master of your actions; so is Monsieur Randeuil. Fight, if you choose. I am neither a Clorinda nor a Bradamante, and certainly shall not go on the ground and throw myself between you. But as I have a right to interfere in an affair which originates with myself, I give you my honour, if this duel take place, our marriage is broken. You shall never set foot in this house again."

Monsieur Lareynie stood transfixed, as if about to receive his adversary's fire; but far less stout of heart, for the eyes of a fair idol are more fearful than the cannon's mouth.

"You hear what I say," continued Ermance,

after a pause; "I shall now dictate to you a suitable letter which will put an end to this ridiculous misunderstanding."

"A letter? to whom?" inquired the Colonel.

"To Monsieur Randeuil."

"Never—never!"

"If you do not sit down at my desk before I leave the room, I will never see you again," said Madame Dupastel, rising from her seat; and she was proceeding towards the adjoining room without even turning her head, when just as she had reached the door, the old man rushed towards her, and impetuously seized her arm.

"Ermance," said he, "one step more, and I die at your feet."

Extricating herself imperiously, Madame Dupastel pointed to the desk, but did not utter a word. At that moment, Lareynie's features seemed almost convulsed. But after shaking his head disconsolately several times,

he sat down as he was ordered. The young widow then placed before him a sheet of paper, and dipping the pen in the ink, placed it in his hand.

"Sir!" said she, beginning to dictate.

"At least explain to me the scene of yesterday?" exclaimed the Colonel;—"I saw him at your feet."

"He *was* at my feet. Write on, Sir!"

"A word Ermance, one word, I entreat you!"

"To what purpose? When I tell you the truth, you do not believe me!"

"You have told the exact truth, then. You *swear* it?—Alas! I fear I must believe your justification!"

"You should have believed me yesterday," said Madame Dupastel proudly; "it does not suit me *now* to justify myself. I will not expose myself to the repetition of having my word denied. Interpret my words as you will, it signifies little."

"I believe you, I *swear* I believe you," replied the Colonel, confounded by this firmness of language. "I even comprehend your susceptibility; but if I stoop to the vile step you require, promise me that the presuming coxcomb shall never be received here again? Oh, promise me!"

"To make such a concession, would be to acknowledge myself wrong. Besides, I do not choose to submit to conditions. You have told me a hundred times that if I married you, I should enjoy entire independence. Allow me to pre-assert that privilege, now that I am still free. It suits me to receive Monsieur Randeuil, and I warn you, that my door will be open to him."

"But he is in love with you!" exclaimed the old man, wildly.

"Puis-je empêcher les gens de me trouver aimable?
Et lorsque, pour me voir, ils me font de doux efforts
Dois-je prendre un bâton pour les mettre dehors?"

said Madame Dupastel, reciting the verses with

an expression worthy of Mademoiselle Mars; and the new Celimène twirled round the tassels of her sash till they flew into the old man's face.

"Come, come—enough of jealousy, and write!" said she. "You know very well you always end by obeying me, then wherefore not begin?"

"Do you suppose, then, I will consent to meet that man in your house again?—In the name of God, how could I help killing him?"

"You will do what all men of the world do when they find a rival: you will try to excel him in all that is amiable and interesting. A surer way to win the heart of woman, than by drawing your sword;—a fashion of the days of the empire, perhaps, but we have now grown more pacific. So remember, I bind myself to nothing. For the present, my door will be open to Monsieur Randeuil; in fact, I choose to be obeyed without conditions. Now, will you write what I am about to dictate, or not?"

"No Madam!" ejaculated Monsieur Lareynie, flinging away the pen,—"I will not."

Without uttering a word, Ermance turned towards the bed-room; and before she reached the door, the old man, for the second time, relented.

"Speak, Madam," said he, with an embittered and irritated voice! "What am I to write? I would fain trace this letter with the last drops of my blood. Perhaps on seeing me lie dead at your feet, you would repent the manner in which you have treated me."

Madame Dupastel subdued a feeling of compassion, which might have endangered her victory, and she forthwith dictated the following letter:

"Sir,

"I beg you will consider the provocation I offered you as revoked, and believe in my sincere wish to live on the best terms with you."

"Sign!"—said the young widow to the Colonel, who obeyed her, although his hand trembled with rage.

Ermance took up the letter, addressed and forwarded it to its destination, without any further interference on the part of her admirer. Among their many talents, women incontestably possess that of following up their successes. Conquered upon the subject of the duel, Monsieur Lareynie did not recover the defeat, but remained in the position of a disarmed combatant who surrenders at discretion. The conspiracy against him not only proceeded, but assuming a new and more decided character every day, Randeuil visited Madame Dupastel, and the Colonel was sure of meeting him, or forestalling him in the drawing-room. Obedient, though reluctantly, to the treaty of peace he had signed, the least digression from which would have condemned him to perpetual banishment, the only means of giving vent to the old man's grief, was the indulgence of satirical

allusions, on little vindictive inuendos; and his manner became suspicious, irritable, and sardonic. It was the season of balls; and independent of morning visits, Hippolyte found his way into all the houses frequented by Madame Dupastel. Three or four times a week, was the Colonel persecuted by seeing the object of his adoration enjoy the pleasure of the alluring waltz in the arms of his imaginary rival, while, long passed the age of dancing, he withdrew to some corner of the room; fixing upon the joyous couple the keen exterminating look with which the vulture pursues his flying prey. His savage physiognomy redoubled the interest which Ermance took in the conspiracy. Never had the world appeared to her more amusing, or gaiety more attractive. Randeuil was an accomplished waltzer, and, moreover, manifested such amiability and assiduity, was at once so intelligent and well bred, that she could not help sometimes thinking—"it is a pity all this should be mere acting!"

By dint of admiring the perfection with which

the young man played his part, Madame Dupastel became less an adept in her own. By an imperceptible progression, she felt a kind of vexation in anticipating the conclusion of this comedy. The unaccountable antipathy she had conceived from the beginning against Mademoiselle Abeille slowly developed itself, without any apparent reason. She seldom pronounced her name in the presence of Hippolyte; who, with a tact unusual in lovers, observed the same silence. Though apparently mutually losing sight of the object of their scheme, they neglected no opportunity for its accomplishment.

Every day their increasing intimacy put the passion of the old Colonel to some new test. The assiduity of Randeuil, at first affected, now became too natural. So warm was the cordiality of his reception, that any one on witnessing the mute intelligence of these two beings, apparently born for each other, might have thought it the result of true and heart-felt attachment.

One evening, the three personages of this

drama were assembled at the house of Madame Dupastel's aunt, to whom Hippolyte had found means of getting presented. Monsieur Lareynie could not avoid sitting down to piquet with the lady, while Ermance placed herself at the piano, much amused with the lugubrious countenance of her aged swain. Randeuil, after affecting for a moment to look at the game, seated himself by her side. They conversed some time without paying much attention to the music, while the Colonel was throwing out his aces and quatorzes, in order to abridge the game, and fidgeting about in his arm-chair so as to catch, in the glass, the figures of the couple to whom he was turning his back.

"Are you aware that the time I granted you expired more than a week ago?" said Madame Dupastel, running her fingers up and down the keys.

"Impossible!" replied Hippolyte, eyeing the ivory hand which was performing these rapid evolutions.

"Twenty-four days! I have counted them correctly."

"They appeared, then, very long to you?" inquired Hippolyte.

"Is it only the days that seem long to us we are tempted to count?" she retorted; and, as if to connect her words, she struck the chords of the instrument with increased vigour. "Might not one fancy he was in the plot! Sometimes I think he would kill you with pleasure, and perhaps me afterwards. Still he does not give in, and it is now time that he decided. Were he really attached to me, it would be already done. But these old soldiers are so obstinate."

"You will see that he prefers this torture to submission. He belonged to the old guard; and the guard dies but never yields."

"Are we not to have some music," inquired the old aunt; "it would please the Colonel more than cards. I never saw him so out of spirits as to-night, and I have not the heart to win any more of his money."

Ermance opened the opera of Guillaume Tell, and began the duet of the second act. Randeuil sang the part of Arnold, and they both executed their parts with a taste and precision which excited the admiration of the old lady. The Colonel, however, refrained from adding his approval. During the whole duet, he paced up and down the room, regardless of disturbing the singing. After the last bar, he paused before the piano, and addressed himself in the tone of one who has made up his mind to an extreme measure.

"Since you are so fond of music," said he, "I ask permission to present you a young beginner."

"Who is that?" inquired Madame Dupastel.

"My daughter, who returns home to-morrow," replied the old man, continuing his walk.

"The old guard is beginning to give way," said Hippolyte, in a low voice, to his fair protectress.

Ermance fixed her eyes upon the young man, who was stooping to utter this whisper; and, vainly trying to smile, she left the piano, sat down near her aunt, and during the remainder of the evening, replied only in monosyllables to the questions addressed to her.

The anticipations of Randeuil were now fully realized. Monsieur Lareynie perceived that some manœuvring was positively necessary to regain the ground which, from day to day, he had lost. He suspected that the conduct of the parties was the result of some vindictive scheme. But from the sudden alteration in Madame Dupastel's manner, he saw that she attached a more than ordinary value to the attentions of which she was the object. However favourable the opinion an old man of a certain age entertains of himself, there are certain moments in which the truth of his position becomes apparent; at his toilet, for instance. The Colonel was forced to confess that, in a contest with a young man of twenty-five, the

issue would, in all probability, be to the advantage of the latter; and the fear of finding in Hippolyte a successful rival, got the better of his repugnance to accept him as a son-in-law. In consequence of this dilemma, Abeille was brought home to assume her place upon the field of action.

"She will be the Desaix division at Marengo," said the old soldier. "If the attack do not succeed, I shall have to make an end of this coxcomb, and shoot myself into the bargain."

CHAPTER IX.

Some days afterwards, Randeuil, on entering the drawing-room of Madame Dupastel, found Monsieur Lareynie and his daughter. The interview was, on the whole, constrained and embarrassed; though the jealous father, affecting not to be aware of his presence, left them at liberty to do as they liked, the better to further his personal projects. A few stolen glances, and mysterious allusions, were all that the young man could adventure; while Abeille sat fixed upon her chair, her eyes cast down, beautiful as an angel, but awkward as a school-girl. Her agitation upon seeing her admirer, partook more of vexation than

tenderness. A woman will forgive having been carried off, but not having been brought back again. Mademoiselle Lareynie, arrived at her twenty-second year, had managed to read a stray novel or two; and in the course of these perusals, had never found the heroine in the midst of the adventure, and at the moment most interesting to two persecuted lovers, conveyed back to school. Far from experiencing any gratitude towards Hippolyte, she resented an act of prudence which by no means emanated from her. On reflection, she suspected that such extreme caution originated in diminished attachment, and could not disguise her inward mortification in being the object of so prosaic and unenthusiastic a passion, instead of finding an admirer worthy a descendant of Werter or Malek-Adhel. The lovely Abeille, oppressed at heart by a system of never-ceasing and persecuting seclusion, had at length begun to attribute to Randeuil, the sufferings of which formerly she was wont to accuse her father.

"Had he chosen, I should now be free," said she to herself; and she loved him all the less for the reflection. Interpreting the impressions of Abeille according to those which he himself experienced, Hippolyte attributed to the presence of the Colonel and Madame Dupastel the indifference with which he was received; this indifference seemed to him out of place, and made him conceive a resentful feeling. Disposed to criticise, the young man regarded with a more scrutinizing than admiring eye, the appearance of the young lady, who, till lately, he had only seen in the simple attire of the school uniform. The examination was little flattering to Mademoiselle Lareynie, who, emancipated from the thraldom of school discipline and simplicity, fell into a style of costume somewhat exaggerated.

"Who the deuce could have invented such a hat as that? Yellow, and with a bird of paradise!" thought Randeuil, minutely examining the different details of her dress. "A bird of Paradise upon a yellow hat! And then, the

red shawl upon the flowered gown! A perfect masquerade! May I die if I do not throw all that into the fire the day after the wedding. The most amusing is, that she thinks herself divinely dressed; and gives herself airs upon the strength of her finery!"

Involuntarily, Hippolyte turned towards Madame Dupastel, who, as usual when at home, was simply yet elegantly attired.

"*There* is a woman who knows how to dress," thought he. "What perfect harmony of taste! How the dark colour of her wrapper sets off the admirable whiteness of her skin. Coquette! she knows it, and no doubt it is to exhibit her graceful neck that she does not wear a collar this morning. How perfect too the effect of the black velvet bows in her fair hair; and look at the slippers on her fairy feet! She sees me admiring them, and hides them under her gown. She guesses everything!—I like that. Abeille would do well to imitate her; instead of shocking us

with those nauseous green boots, with which she seems enchanted. Ermance has a foot as diminutive as it is well shaped. Her hand, too, is so delicate and elegant, that, by comparison, all others appear coarse and vulgar. Assuredly Abeille is handsome, perhaps handsomer than Madame Dupastel. Her features are more regular, her eyes finer, her style more classical. But still, I know not—seeing one by the side of the other, it is impossible not to find Abeille's face rather monotonous; handsome, but ever the same! Ermance has such a play of features; never the same expression two days running. To-day, for instance, how thoughtful, how melancholy, though habitually so gay. She has been some days thus. Why, I wonder? Is she unwell, or is it the prospect of her marriage?—That old Cassander of hers is enough to give any woman the nightmare! Poor angel! I don't wonder she looks unhappy."

At that moment, his eyes encountered those

of Ermance; and after exchanging a longing look, she relapsed into her thoughtfulness; while Randeuil, persisting in his comparisons, discovered every minute some fresh subject of criticism in the manners or conversation of his former idol.

For some time, Hippolyte was sure to meet Colonel Lareynie and his daughter, at every visit he made to Madame Dupastel; a circumstance too frequent to be purely accidental; but failing in the result anticipated by Monsieur Lareynie. Mortification at her admirer's neglect, imparted a cold and haughty expression to Abeille's countenance, as well as a kind of premeditated reserve to her manner; nor did Hippolyte seem disposed to revive the fervour of which he was once the object. Far from trying to conciliate her, he remained reserved, comparing, analysing, and lost in a state of hesitation, which became more and more perplexing. Ermance seldom laughed, rarely even smiled, and vainly tried to dissi-

mulate her increasing melancholy. Polite to Mademoiselle Lareynie, she pointedly avoided addressing Randeuil; and with an ungenerous tyranny, inflicted upon her aged admirer the tedium of her own despondency. By degrees, this state of depression assumed a more serious character. Society wearied her, and one morning, her door was denied to all; not excepting her aged admirer, and youthful protégé.

After four days, during which he did not see Madame Dupastel, Randeuil fell into a kind of apathy, the usual result of inertness. A letter to the young widow, evincing the warmest interest, produced an answer as reserved as it was cold.—In order to occupy his evenings, he frequented the theatres; and on one occasion, met General Thorignon, whose visit he had returned some days before. After some common place observations, the old soldier took Hippolyte familiarly by the arm.

"I owe you some reparation," said he, "for I know all; and your reluctance to fight with my old friend the Colonel, has nothing to surprise me. A man should think twice, before he goes out to kill his father-in-law."

"Monsieur Lareynie is not my father-in-law," replied Hippolyte.

"Not yet, I know. But are you not impatient that he should be so?" replied the old General, smiling.

"It is impossible!" coldly replied Hippolyte.

"Nothing is impossible," earnestly observed the old soldier. "Listen to me. I am a poor diplomatist, but let us meet the question at once. I have made inquiries concerning you; and find that in spite of your too pacific intentions, you made an example of one of the most awful lions of the Opera. You are a right good fellow, and would make a fitting protector for the daughter of an old soldier, like Lareynie. The Colonel is not so terrible as he looks; and I can

always make him listen to reason. Have you confidence in me? Will you entrust me with your interests? The other day, I brought you a hostile message. Here I am, ready to undertake one of another nature, if you will only trust me."

"I thank you, General. But since you are intimate with the Colonel, you must be aware that he positively refused me the hand of his daughter."

"Nonsense! Lareynie is like the pretty women, who always begin by saying no. *I* will engage to make him say yes. Odds bombs, and bullets! I have known him these forty years. Did we not, at the passage of the Beresina, eat cartouche boxes fried in gunpowder, and together think ourselves too happy? After such a dinner, men remain not only friends for life, but brothers. Were I to say, give your daughter to Randeuil, he must do it!"

"I would not have Monsieur Lareynie do violence to his feelings by accepting me for his

son-in-law;" said Randeuil, whose matrimonial ardour seemed to diminish in proportion as the obstacles disappeared.

"But who talks of violence?" replied General Thorignon. "May not the circumstances, as well as his sentiments have changed? How do you know that the Colonel is not disposed to renew the negociation? You must well imagine that would be unbecoming the paternal dignity to make the first advance. But if I make this offer, it is that I am sure of your being accepted."

"Monsieur Lareynie, then, has commissioned you General, to ascertain my actual feelings as to marriage?" inquired Randeuil, maintaining the most diplomatic reserve.

"I did not say that!" replied the old General, laughing; "do not fall into new blunders. My intervention is of my own free will. Is it your pleasure to accept it?"

"Grant me a day's reflection," said Hippolyte, with an air of gravity.

"*Again?*" exclaimed the General. "You

are a man of most procrastinating habits. In *my* youth, odds bombs, and batteries! duels, love, marriage, every thing was decided in the twinkling of an eye.—After all, your system may be the best.—Well! I grant you your twenty-four hours!"

The music announced the rising of the curtain for the second act of the Sylphide, which put an end to the conversation; and the two gentlemen separated, promising to meet again at the General's, at the expiration of the delay conceded.

CHAPTER X.

Next day, about one o'clock, Randeuil presented himself at Madame Dupastel's. He was denied admittance; but the femme-de-chambre, to whom he was more acceptable than the old Celadon, and who had interpreted the melancholy of her mistress, with the sagacity peculiar to her calling, took him under her protection.

At sight of her admirer, Ermance, faintly blushing, tried to rise but sank down again, utterly depressed.

"I had given orders to them not to let any body in," said she; "the sight of a poor invalid is so insupportable, that I have condemned myself to absolute solitude. You

do not find the person here whom you came to seek."

"Whom?" inquired Randeuil, surveying the fine form of the sufferer, half reclining on the sofa.

"Mademoiselle Lareynie came here a short time ago. I regret that I did not admit her; but how could I anticipate your visit?"

"Had I wished to see Mademoiselle Lareynie," said Hippolyte, "I should have gone to her father's, and not come here."

"The Colonel receives you then? You go there?" said the young widow, raising herself.

"I could if I thought proper."

"I see you did not choose to avail yourself of the privilege, before you had made it known to me. Good! In rendering you a trifling service, my good intentions have not been thrown away. I have not seen Monsieur Lareynie for some days—I suffer so much, I can see no one. So then, all is settled.—When is to be the marriage?"

"Was it not decided that the two weddings should take place together?" inquired Randeuil, whose eyes seem fixed upon the graceful figure of his beautiful and desponding protectress.

"There will be but one," said she abruptly.

"Mine or your own?"

"Yours—yours—oh! do not fear."

"But yours!" said Hippolyte hesitating. "Forgive my anxiety. Is not Monsieur Lareynie to marry you shortly!"

"Never!" exclaimed Ermance.

"Never! I entreat you repeat that word again."

"What means this?" cried she earnestly regarding him.

"It means that I am happy; that every thing seems enchantment! I breathe freely. So then, you will not marry him?—You said *never!* a sacred word. Youth, beauty, grace, will escape the profanation of that horrible old man!—You perceive at last, that

such an alliance would be sacrilege! Of what avail your spring tide of life, enslaved by his decrepitude? One strews roses over a tomb, one does not enclose them within. The first condition of happiness, is harmony. You have endured so much that your sorrows steel your heart against the professions of youth. But because a first ordeal was fraught with bitterness, are your hopes to be for ever withered? Because one man was unable to appreciate the treasure he possessed, do you deem the sanctity of devotion impossible? Is it because you trample the buds and flowers of life under foot, you boast of your experience and wisdom? Ermance! Love has a real and true existence! But I forgot myself in wishing to convince you of that which you no longer doubt! You are free! The blessings of liberty, youth, and love may still be ours."

Madame Dupastel supported herself against the back of the sofa, while Randeuil unbosomed his feelings. Her hands were clasped together,

her eyes partly closed. On hearing her name pronounced by a voice tremulous with adoration, she experienced emotions long unfelt.

"You did not answer me," said she, "when I asked you when you were to marry?"

"Because you know it better than I do!" replied Randeuil, to whom the first glance of Ermance had betrayed her. "How should I know it?—It depends wholly upon *you*."

"I thought it depended upon Mademoiselle Abeille," observed the young widow. "It appears to me that you have rather forgotten the heroine of your romance."

"My romance is ended, and my life now begins," replied Hippolyte, seizing her lovely hand, which this time was but reluctantly withheld. "I confess myself to have been out of my senses. But forgive me, I did not know you then, and mistook for love the freaks of an irritable imagination thwarted by impediments. In that young girl, it was the victim of paternal despotism with whom I sympathised.

Behind bars and blinds, any woman appears an angel. Upon a closer view, the wings of the angel too often vanish, and in place of the celestial being I thought to have discovered in Abeille, I find a raw, graceless, insignificant school-girl! Under any circumstances, the veil would have fallen after half-a-dozen interviews. But by your side, illusion was, from the first, impossible. Seeing you both together, I sought in vain a passion which was but a mere shadow; but in its place, found another, of whose existence I was unaware—a passion genuine, deep, and fervent!"

Hippolyte fell upon his knees, and his arms quickly surrounded the waist of the irresistible widow. She made an effort indeed to escape, but too feeble to avail.

"How am I to know that this is not another comedy?" said she, concealing her emotion with a smile.

"No no!—all, henceforward, is reality!"

"And what are we to do now?"

"Love each other, and be married as soon as possible!" exclaimed Hippolyte with enthusiasm.

"You take things coolly indeed! But even were I to consent, you may forget the other two!"

"I think only of you. Besides, what could they say? We were two children—you to think of marrying an old man;—I to run after a half formed school girl! Now we are more reasonable. Monsieur Lareynie must think of his last will and testament. His daughter will forget me, if she have not already done so; and we shall be perfectly happy." A noise in the adjoining room interrupted the interview, and Hippolyte quickly started up, for the comedy was over.

Monsieur Lareynie now entered the room conducting his daughter, with her inevitable bird of paradise!

"You missed your angel's wings," whispered Ermance; "do you not see them on her hat?"

Exchanging smiles, they began the reverse

of the scene they had been playing. Indifferent, they had affected love;—in love, they affected indifference. But this time, they were not equal to their parts. The heart is but a clumsy actor. Their looks and words, though most involuntarily, would have revealed a secret understanding to the least observant of observers. Convinced of this connivance, which every moment betrayed itself by trifles, insignificant in appearance only too significant in his estimation, Monsieur Lareynie writhed under the most painful tortures of jealousy. His apprehensions were beyond doubt, when he learnt from General Thorignon that Randeuil positively renounced the honour of the hand of Abeille.

"What does he expect, then?" exclaimed he, in a paroxysm of anger. "Does he hope to marry Ermance?"

Excruciated by the thought, the old beau proceeded to the house of Madame Dupastel.

"Long, much too long, have you deferred

the climax of my happiness," said he. "This delay kills me, and I will endure it no longer. I will not leave this house till you have fixed our wedding day."

"I have already told you, that you must first grant the hand of your daughter to Monsieur Randeuil," replied the young widow, dreading to communicate the truth to the old beau.

"I have granted it, and it is he, now, who does not choose to accept; and I know the reason of his refusal. He loves you, Madam, nay, perhaps pretends to your hand."

"Will you kill me if I grant it?"—asked Ermance, affecting to laugh, though in reality afraid of the violence to which Monsieur Lareynie had just given way.

"You know I could not!" replied he; "it is he whom I would kill! If he refuse to fight me now, on the day of the wedding and at the foot of the altar, he should die."

"What melo-drama did you see last night, my dear Colonel? I never saw you in so

sanguinary a humour!" said Ermance. "The passage of the Beresina was a mere pastoral compared with what you threaten."

In spite of the assumed indifference with which she listened to the vindictive threat of the old man, she was seriously alarmed; and would fain have imparted her terrors to her admirer.

"What folly!" said he. "The old fellow is in his second childhood."

"You did not see the expression of his eyes! I tried to laugh, though I was horribly frightened."

"Nonsense—nonsense!"

"I tell you, he is capable of any thing," replied Ermance, disposed, like all women, to exaggerate the intenseness of the passion of which she is the object. "I will not allow you to meet each other here."

"That is to say, you will shut your door against him; just what I was about to ask you! I will not allow the old fop to come and pester

you to death with his antiquated rodomontades."

"Shut my door!—can I?"—said she, as if unwilling to assent.

"What hinders you?"

"A thousand reasons. He has been so long in a state of agitation, that such a proceeding would overwhelm him. He is more than sixty; at that age, such emotions have the most fatal consequences."

"I am astonished that he is still alive. Had I only a good chest complaint at my disposal!"

"Hippolyte, I never should forgive myself if any thing happened on my account; I should be miserable. Poor old man!"

"Rather say intolerable old bore."

"Does it astonish you that he should love me?" said Madame Dupastel.

"No, but I must be henceforward the only one to love you to distraction."

Heaven seemed to propitiate the prayer of

Randeuil. The violent agitation to which the Colonel had been for some time subjected, had an evil influence on his constitution, already impaired by the fatigues of war. After leaving a ball, in which he had seen his rival dance three successive country dances with Madame Dupastel, a trembling seized him—fever ensued; and in spite of the skill of the physicians, the man of a certain age was compelled to take to his bed. When the attack had lost its serious symptoms, he was still subjected to a strict regimen, and absolute seclusion. Hippolyte was thus left master of the field, and hastened to take advantage of his position. The attachment of Madame Dupastel was too deep—too sincere—not to obliterate the remembrance of the old man, whom she now saw no more, and for whom she had never entertained any other interest than that of compassion.

On learning that Monsieur Lareynie was in a state of convalescence, Ermance consented to

fix the day of the irmarriage—a step hourly urged by her admirer; but with much good feeling, she wished the ceremony to take place as privately as possible, lest the news, reaching the ears of the Colonel, should oppose a fresh obstacle to his recovery. The lovers accomplished the most solemn action of their lives, observing as much mystery and precaution as if they had meditated some act of guilt. Immediately after the nuptial benediction, they quitted Paris, in order that they might avoid the scene which must infallibly take place upon meeting Monsieur Lareynie.

One bright morning in spring, Ermance and Hippolyte took the road to Belgium in a comfortable travelling carriage—a hideous road which, to them, seemed strewed with roses. A short time before reaching the first stage, the bridegroom pointed out to his bride a decayed elm which stood on the road side.

"I love that tree, and wish we had it in our garden!" said he.

"It has surely no great beauty to recommend it?" replied Ermance.

"None whatever; but it recalls the first day of my happiness. It was here I turned back, when carrying off Mademoiselle Lareynie."

"How came you to select this ugly road?" asked the bride; "it is detestable! On this occasion, I could willingly turn back."

"It is too late!" said Randeuil, laughing, and with one arm rapturously encircling the lovely waist of Ermance, he indulged in all the protestations of the happiest of bridegrooms.

CHAPTER XI.

About the middle of August, the newly married couple, after visiting Belgium and Holland, returned by the Rhine, so that they might return to France by the duchy of Baden, where they remained some days, the baths having attracted a gay throng of strangers.

One of the first familiar faces met by Randeuil, was that of General Thorignon. He quitted his wife's arm for a moment, (who also recognised a Parisian acquaintance), and went up to the old soldier, whose reception, though cordial, seemed to betray a certain embarrassment.

"Who is the lady you are with?" inquired the General, after some insignificant comments.

"My wife," replied Randeuil; "did you not know I was married?"

"But too well," answered the old man shaking his head. "*That* then is Madame Dupastel!—pardon me, she who *was* Madame Dupastel! She is charming, most charming,—and I am far from astonished at the ravings of my poor friend Lareynie!"

"What has become of him?" inquired Hippolyte, really interested.

"Do not ask me!" replied Thorignon. "I had rather he had remained in the snow with his brave companions in Russia! Yes, Madame Dupastel, Randeuil I should say, can boast of having been more fatal to the poor Colonel than the frozen north, or the lances of the Cossacks! Such is the heart of man! a delicate foot, or expressive eye, is sufficient to annihilate the most undaunted of us! I who speak to you, had well nigh lost my wits for the sake of little Armandine of the Opera!—Luckily, I possess more moral courage than my

old friend Lareynie, and am come to forget my sorrows in the gaiety of Baden. Poor Lareynie! shocking business! But I know there is no reproach to make you or Madame Randeuil. You were both young—both in love—marriage was inevitable! Others would have done the same in your place. I for one, must confess you were much in the right to prefer this marriage, to that which I undertook to negociate. Had you married the other, where would you be *now!*"—

"What do you mean?" inquired Randeuil.

"Have you not heard of the adventure of Mademoiselle Lareynie?"

"No; we are just returned from Holland, and for these three months past, have heard nothing."

"Know then, my dear Sir, that Mademoiselle Abeille—your former flame—who, thanks to the negligence of her father, received a most detestable education and got her head well crammed with romances, decamped one fine

morning—with her music master, and is now in London. What say you to that? You have had an escape I think."

"And this time she was not brought back again! My wife was right! Elopement was a vocation with that poor little girl."

"You may imagine the consequence of such a history, disclosed to the Colonel, when scarcely convalescent, after having suddenly learnt your marriage! I thought for several days, he would have gone completely mad."

"But where is he? what is he doing now?" inquired Hippolyte, more and more interested in the fate of the wretched old man.

"He is here!" said the General; "did you not know it?"

"Here?"—exclaimed Randeuil, in surprise.

Ermance joining her husband, put an end to this conversation; and the latter, in presenting the old General to his wife, enjoined the strictest silence. The evening was advanced; and the happy couple left the old

soldier, and entered the public rooms crowded by the gay visitors of the baths.

Having paraded the ball room, they entered an adjoining apartment—in the centre of which was a green table, upon which figured a series of figures as incomprehensible at first sight as the hieroglyphics of an Egyptian obelisk, on either side of which were seated certain individuals of a sombre and inflexible countenance, holding wooden rakes in their hands, and handling the piles of gold and silver before them, with as much indifference as a child its playthings. Two ranks of either sex, one seated, the other standing, hemmed in the table, upon which were performed, under the sanction of the Grand Duke of Baden, the mysteries of Rouge et Noir.

Having watched with painful excitement the distorted physiognomy of several distinguished looking men and elegant women, who one and all bore upon their forehead the mark of the demon claw of play, Ermance and Hippolyte were

about to quit the room; when the latter suddenly halted, struck by the appearance of an individual seated close to one of the ministers of perdition. He was a man of a certain age, of wild and sinister expression of countenance. In his face, pale and emaciated, one detected the trace of some ungovernable passion, which had left marks of premature decrepitude. His eyes were sunk into their orbits, while their arches were denuded of eyebrows. From beneath an ill fitting wig, protruded importunate grey hairs; while his whole attire evinced complete indifference as to personal appearance. Leaning over the pile of gold and notes which lay before him, he seemed absorbed by the progress of the deal, every point of which he carefully marked upon a card.

Hippolyte had no difficulty in discovering in this stranger, whose exterior inspired such compassion, his unfortunate rival; and he would fain have taken away Ermance, so as to spare her this mortifying scene. But the end

of the deal caused a general movement among the lookers on.

While the croupier was preparing the cards for the succeeding deal, several of the players rose; when suddenly, Monsieur Lareynie found himself standing before the happy pair, so that Randeuil could not well avoid him.

At sight of Ermance and her husband, the old man appeared convulsed; his sullen looks brightened and his extinguished eyes flashed, while a hectic colour rushed into his death-like cheeks. In spite of the alteration which might have made him difficult to recognise, Madame Randeuil instantly sent forth a shriek of fear and pity.

Monsieur Lareynie hesitated, as if suffering from terrible internal excitement; at last, inclining before his once adored idol, "Do I frighten you, Madam?" said he in a broken voice, with a smile as ghastly as that of a dead body subjected to the operations of galvanism.

Ermance muttered some incoherent words.

Her old admirer made no allusion to his former attachment; but his dreadful metamorphosis spoke sufficiently. Between the sexagenarian dandy, adonized, painted, perfumed, nursing his decayed remains with the solicitude of a coquette, and the ill-clad gamester, there was an immeasurable abyss—an abyss of her sole creation! A knock of the reckless croupier on the table, recalled the victims to their mad vocation; and Monsieur Lareynie clasped his forehead with his hands, and bade farewell to Ermance.

"You are playing then?" said she, with a tone of friendly reproach.

"I have just lost fifteen thousand francs," replied he coldly.

"But you will ruin yourself!" she persisted with much emotion.

Monsieur Lareynie looked at her sternly. "Not quite, but I am getting on. How else was I likely to drive the past from my recollection?"

As he said this, he sat down, and threw down a bank note, drawn in by the merciless instrument of ruin, just as the wind carries off the fallen leaf.

"Let us go," said Ermance to her husband; "the air of the place stifles me."

They left the splendid den, and went out to breathe the pure, uncontaminated air. The night was calm, the orange trees in flower, and the heavens dazzling with stars.

"We will go away to-morrow—shall we not?" said the young wife in a tone of depression.

"You seem unhappy?" said Randeuil, affectionately pressing her arm.

"Alas! we have much to reproach ourselves with!"

"Something perhaps; but his own folly is the origin of all. In a man of his age, his passion for you was almost as unbecoming as his present infatuation for play. When he should have thought only of being a father, he chose to play the lover; and see what have been the

result for his neglected daughter!—Remember all his youthful airs, his idle vanities!—He was ever intent upon some folly unbecoming his years!"

"And dearly has he paid for them," replied Ermance gravely.

"Thank heaven that you, at least, have escaped participation in the consequence of his absurdities, dear Ermance. Human happiness cannot be insured at a ratio of so much per year, like human life. Trust me, you have a better chance with a man of your own years, habits, and pursuits, than with a frivolous and vain-minded MAN OF A CERTAIN AGE."

AN APT SCHOLAR.

AN APT SCHOLAR.

CHAPTER I.

Towards the end of the carnival of 1835, a long string of carriages, graced with armorial escutcheons, was besieging the entrance of one of the sumptuous mansions of the Faubourg St. Germain, the gates of which were open, while the windows remained closed; though common sense suggested the reverse, for the internal air diminishing in proportion as the guests increased, suffocation seemed to threaten the brilliant throng.—Nevertheless, these sufferers of fashion, whether men or women, especially the latter, supported with admirable fortitude an atmosphere which

would have been death to a negro.—Of the old stagers, three or four took up their positions, out of the vortex, in a group composed of four or five men from twenty-five to forty years of age, whose social position was defined by certain symptoms in which the close observer is seldom mistaken. Indifferent to the splendour of the passing *scene*, they resigned themselves listlessly to the entertainments of the night; in contradistinction to the newly launched bumpkins from the provinces, whose curiosity is rarely satisfied till they have ransacked every corner of the house. Regardless of the spectators, they conversed among themselves, interfered with no one, and listened to the announcement of the most brilliant names in France with complete indifference; not so much as turning their heads for dukes or ambassadors. When some woman of unquestionable fashion, however, made her entrée, they deigned to bestow a glance upon her, quickly followed by some stroke of satire by way of

palliative to such involuntary deference, that it might not be ascribed to a vulgar or schoolboy-like curiosity.

Three of these dandies, lions of the most distinguished ton, stood opposite the fourth, who, ensconced in an arm-chair, his legs crossed, and his arms carelessly folded, while his head, leaning against the window, was thrown into relief by the red damask curtains behind.

This last, the most remarkable of the four, was a man about forty years old; who at first appeared somewhat younger, but upon a second view, rather older. He was tall, well featured, and of so taper a waist, that a sagacious tailor would have suspected the existence of stays, for the purpose of concealing nascent obesity. Dressed with the most exquisite simplicity, the three great attributes of birth, wealth, and intelligence, were manifest in his person. In the street, the common herd forgave his straw-coloured gloves in favour of his distinguished appearance. In the drawing-room, every first-

rate woman pronounced him charming. His superiority of soul, and the brilliant intelligence of his physiognomy seemed to arise from mental capacity; and on beholding him, Diogenes would at once have extinguished his lantern.

This favourite of nature was now the topic of conversation in the little group. He bore the pleasantries and quizzing of his friends with the perfect good humour of one too sure of his dignity to take offence; persuaded that he could readily check the excess of familiarity by saying like Louis XIV,—"Hold, gentlemen—the king is coming."

"As we are upon the chapter of Choisy," said one of the talkers, "I must tell you the most unheard of, the most extraordinary—"

"We have all read Madame de Sévigné's letters," interrupted the king of the lions; "so, to the fact."

"The fact is this," said the young man who in consideration of his youth dared not pretend to a higher degree of dignity than that of a

lion's whelp. "This morning, in passing by Tortoni's, I saw with horror our friend Choisy's favourite mare, Rebecca, mounted—guess by whom?"

"You are mistaken Marcenay!" replied a good looking young man, wearing the almost forgotten order of Malta, "Choisy, upon principle, never lends his horses."

"I tell you she was mounted by some lineal descendant of Goliath, whose feet embarrassed the mare's fetlocks, while his head came in contact with the lanterns suspended across the street. On seeing him pass, the people repeated the fable of La Fontaine, exclaiming with one accord, 'poor beast!—had heaven been just, the rider should carry the horse!'"

"Is this true, Choisy?" said a spare little man, who had not yet spoken, "you refused to lend me Rebecca for Chantilly, and now suffer her to drag about an elephant!"

"You may indeed say so," said the Viscount de Choisy, smiling. "Rebecca returned home

in such a condition, that my groom got drunk in despair. At this moment, she is lying on her litter, with her groom beside her, both half dead."

"And who pray is this Patagonian?" inquired Monsieur de Marcenay.

"Monsieur de Beaupré, a country neighbour of mine in the Nivernais. During his short stay in Paris, this is the third horse he has destroyed. Orson is lamed, and Wallace has broken both his knees."

"Beaupré?" replied the little spare man. "That reminds me that, on Monday last, Randeuil, du Bellay, a few others, and myself, were shooting in the preserves of Choisy. After four hours' walking, we had not so much as seen the shadow of a hare or rabbit; and on expressing our astonishment, the Viscount's keeper replied to us, that since Monsieur de Beaupré had permission to sport in those woods, it was in vain to fire off a gun, for that he kills and carries away every thing. This Nimrod

is, doubtless, the Goliath to whom Marcenay alludes."

"Himself," replied the Viscount.

"And so you allow him to ransack your woods, you who lately refused the Duke of Boisbriant a day's shooting, of which, between ourselves, he complains bitterly."

"Let him complain to Monsieur de Beaupré. I certainly gave him the right of life and death over my rabbits."

"And your horses also?" added the knight of Malta. "Such generosity cannot be without a motive; were you in debt, I could almost think him some creditor, whose heart you would fain soften."

"Were you ambitious," said the little spare man, "I should fancy he had some influence in the approaching election."

"And I," said the youngest, "bet ten to one that he is simply a married man, in which case I yield my absolution to Choisy."

"Good, Marcenay, very good!" replied the

Viscount; "you come nearer the truth than the others, only that Monsieur de Beaupré has been a widower these fifteen years."

"Enough of Beaupré!" said the knight of Malta. "I have another grievance against Choisy, on which you shall decide. Yesterday, which is nothing new, he asked me to dinner."

"That is surely a pardonable offence," replied Marcenay.

"Had the party consisted of two, or even four. But whom do you think I found for third and last?—a disciple of the college of St. Sulpice, blushing at every word, in whose honour, as it was Friday, we fasted, like three reverend fathers of the church; ay, devoutly fasted upon turbot, mullet, and pine apples."

"I am sorry my dinner did not suit you," said Choisy drily.

"It was not the dinner, it was the jesuit who displeased me. I could not imagine what he was muttering as we sat down to table, which proved to be the benedicite."

"I beg to observe," replied the Viscount

"that a knight of Malta ought at least to call cousins with a jesuit; besides, Monsieur de Luscourt is no more a jesuit than yourself. He is well born, and thanks to his mother has received an education in which religion has not been overlooked. I see nothing to laugh at in this. Believe me, sneers, à la Voltaire, are out of date."

"My dear fellow," said Marcenay, "you are really too edifying! I do not despair of seeing you one day decked in pontificalibus, and giving us a second volume of Frère Ange de Joyeuse."

"Pending which, Choisy is learning the dowager game of boston," interrupted the little spare man. "At the last party at Madame de Candeille's, I saw him seated as partner to a strange looking being, commonly known by the name of Escarbagnas, in consequence of her florid style of dress exceeding any thing which ever graced the circles of Brives la Gaillarde or of Castelnaudary."

The four friends laughed immoderately at this sally.

"Allow me," said Choisy, their hilarity being somewhat abated, "to enlighten you upon one or two of the subjects which excite your mirth. Know, then, that the Countess of Escarbagnas mentioned by Bertier is, in reality, the Marchioness de Gardagne, mother to the virtuous Monsieur de Luscourt, whom Villaret met yesterday at my table; and that this same Luscourt, is son-in-law to Monsieur de Beaupré, the terror of grooms and gamekeepers.—You are all three geniuses. Be pleased to guess."

"What?" inquired Bertier.

The Viscount shrugged his shoulders, and looked inquiringly at the other two.

"I imagine you to have organised a plan of seduction against this family of antidiluvians," said the knight of Malta; "but for what purpose, I am as ignorant as Bertier."

"And you, Marcenay?" inquired the Prince of fashion of the aspiring whelp.

At this appeal to his acuteness, the youth seemed to ponder.

"Is there not a fourth person of the family, as yet unmentioned?" said he, with a smile.

"Marcenay, you will make your way in the world," replied Choisy; "your seniors ought to blush in listening to you. Yes, there exists a fourth—but somewhat less antidiluvian than the rest."

The voice of the servant, announcing the names at the door, now predominated over the confused murmur of the assembly; and two names immediately re-echoed one after the other—"The Marchioness de Gardagne!" —"The Countess de Luscourt!"

The same feeling of curiosity caused each of the friends to turn round. The Viscount also rose; and the eyes of all four were fixed upon the entrance of the room.

CHAPTER II.

THE first person who entered was a fat man of jovial appearance, whose head, half grey, half bald, towered six inches above the others, like the brow of Ajax in the Iliad. Profiting by his colossal weight, the gift of nature, he penetrated the crowd in line direct, without meeting with the least resistance; for one might as well have obstructed the road to a horse in full gallop, as impede his progress. This living bastion escorted an elderly lady, dressed in a dark brown gown, her head covered with one of those dowager caps, which might be the work of Macbeth's witches, so impossible is it to assign them an exact definition. Under a black velvet brim, fantasti-

cally distorted, and tricked up with little red feathers, were two weasel-like eyes, and a nose peeping inquisitively at her teeth. Behind this couple, came another no less remarkable, but of a different kind; a young man about twenty-five, of distinguished appearance, but with a face whose meekness of expression was almost sanctimonious, giving his arm to one of the most fascinating women who had as yet made her appearance. To describe her, one must have recourse to the palette of the old sonneteers, on which white and red, ebony, auburn, and celestial blue, are alone admitted. To adopt their language, in speaking of our heroine, her eyes were diamonds, surmounted by arches of jet, her glossy hair divided upon her brow, resembled two raven's wings, symmetrically enclosing a globe of alabaster. Upon her cheek, raged a war betwixt the lily and the rose; her lips, when closed, were of rubies, when open, pearls. To be brief, and replacing the delicate pencil of Dorat in its musky case,

the lady upon whom the attention of Choisy and his friends was concentrated, was one of the most enchanting specimens of dark beauty well to be imagined. The magic contour of her waist was displayed to the utmost advantage in a dress of bright crimson velvet, and had her numerous diamonds been united in a crown upon her head, her air of youthful royalty would have rendered her the fitting occupant of a throne. Beautiful and proud, she passed on with easy dignity, her companion seeming rather to derive support from her than to impart it.

"Well," said the Viscount, turning with a smile towards his friends, "what say you?"

"Beautiful!" replied Bertier; "but ill dressed, and carrying her head too high. She takes up too much room in the world; something in the style of her father, the drum-major."

"That is precisely what pleases me most in her," said the knight of Malta. "She is only twenty, fresh from the provinces, as one

may perceive, by the blazing gown and diamonds of the date of Louis XIV. Nevertheless, in spite of these two incongruities, she has produced a great effect here. She puts me in mind of the Queen of Sheba approaching the throne of Solomon."

"Had she less colour, I should think her irreproachable," observed Marcenay, who, as the slave of fashion, was devoted to the worship of pallid beauties of the interesting school.

Choisy eyed his friends with an air of disdain.

"You are right," said he; "she dresses ill, walks ill, and has many other defects, not instantly perceptible. Her education is not complete. But do not alarm yourselves—it has begun."

"*You* have undertaken it, then?" inquired Marcenay. "I congratulate you, my dear fellow! I would fain dispute the task with you, had I not urgent occupations. Above all,

bleach her, I entreat. Rose colour is the type of vulgarity."

"How far have you proceeded?" inquired the knight of Malta. "Is it summer or harvest time?"

Choisy muttered a few indistinct words.

Meanwhile, the lane so victoriously achieved by the irresistable progress of Madame de Beaupré, had allowed Madame de Gardagne and her daughter-in-law, to penetrate as far as the second drawing-room, where they were seated side by side. Monsieur de Luscourt took up a position behind his wife's chair, to which he appeared screwed down; an assiduity generally attributed to jealousy, but which proceeded solely from shyness. On the other hand, Monsieur Beaupré indulging in the locomotion for which lazy people have so troublesome a tendency, began a peregrination through the apartments, seeking out his acquaintances, rushing through the compactest masses, and totally regardless of the ladies'

trimmings, or the superlative varnish of the men. One of the first persons he met, was the Viscount de Choisy, whom he immediately seized by the button.

"My dear fellow!" said he, in a double bass voice which would have put to the proof the nerves of a young elephant—"thanks to you, I have had an enchanting ride! Rebecca is the pleasantest hack I ever mounted. I fear, though, she will give you a sad account of me. I fancy I tired her."

"She will recover," replied the Viscount, politely.

"In taking her back to her stable, I perceived another horse, and for the first time: dark bay, short tail, Norman head, which would just suit me. A horse's head should always cover its rider. In the army, we consider that a first rate advantage. What is the name of the dark bay?"

"Mario," replied the Viscount, suppressing a sigh.

"Well, then, to-morrow I will make his acquaintance; that is to say, with your permission."

"I need not assure you that my whole stud is at your orders," replied Choisy, who secretly felt that he deserved expulsion from the jockey club.

"Have you wished the ladies good evening?" inquired Beaupré.

"I was looking for them."

"You will find them at the other end of the drawing-room. Pray thaw the deportment of that mummy of a son-in-law of mine. He bores me to death with his quaker-like style of dress and manners.—Are there cards?"

"Yes, in the room to the right."

"I saw a gun at Lepage's yesterday. If I could only win five hundred francs, your rabbits should tell you news of it."

At length left to himself, the Viscount began by adjusting the lappel of his coat, somewhat deranged by the energetic twitchings of Beau-

pré's colossal fingers; who, among other familiarities, had a trick of seizing those he addressed by the collar. He then crossed the room, and halted before Madame de Luscourt, seated between her mother-in-law and husband. In spite of his meek appearance, Choisy could not but compare the latter with the dragon of the Hesperides. As to the Marchioness, he had long since exhausted the vocabulary of epithets applicable to an inconvenient duenna.

The swain of forty stood transfixed, when the Countess d'Agost, the lady of the house, stood before him, with the confiding smile which women sometimes bestow upon men of the world.

"I am in a sad dilemma," said she; "the old Duchess of Rieux is just come in, and if I cannot make up her Boston, she will never forgive me! I see only Monsieur Martonie who is willing to sacrifice himself."

"Here is Madame de Gardagne, to whom

such a proposition will be too acceptable, and by no means a penance."

"And will you be the fourth, then?" asked Madame d'Agost, smiling. "I hear that at Madame de Candeille's you edified all the world."

"I entreat you, be generous! Allow me to enjoy the pleasures of this delightful party," said he, in a persuasive tone.

"Provided you find me a substitute."

Choisy looked rapidly around him, and seeing Marcenay close at hand, fondly caressing his mustachios, led him up to the mistress of the house.

"Thank the Countess," said he, in a solemn tone, "who has done you the honour of naming you as partner of the Duchess of Rieux."

The young man bowed mechanically, but on raising his head, his countenance had assumed an expression of amazement which provoked

an unavoidable burst of laughter from Madame d'Agost.

"Come," said she, "I will present you to a charming partner, who, I trust, will prove a compensation for your disappointment with the dowager duchess."

Without allowing him time to hesitate, she took him straight up to Madame de Gardagne, to whom Marcenay found himself compelled to offer his arm to proceed to the card-room; which he did with the resignation of a criminal about to be executed, after a glance of furious indignation at his friend.

The duenna was thus disposed of. The conjugal dragon remained.

Without loss of time, Choisy went in search of the knight of Malta, who was wandering from room to room.

"You must pay me my yesterday's dinner," said he, smiling.

Villaret put his hand in his pocket.

"For twenty francs, I should have fared bet-

ter at the Café de Paris. What is your price?"

"Half an hour's conversation with Monsieur de Luscourt."

"Dear at the price! Of what can I talk to such a man, except the council of Trent, or the Pragmatic sanction?"

"Talk to him of the last work of Abbé de la Mennais, or a chapter concerning your beloved order. He is a paragon of erudition on all useless subjects."

"Thank you! Well! I owe you something for the games of billiards you won of old Darient, for the sake of his wife and me. I will do my best."

The Chevalier de Villaret now made the round of the room, and found himself, as if by chance, at the side of Monsieur de Luscourt, whom he addressed most graciously. The provincial received him with the awkwardness of a man who approaches the shores of a world to which he is an utter alien. A servant entered, carry-

ing a tray of refreshment, when Villaret gently pushed Monsieur de Luscourt in order to free the passage; but yielding to the reflux of the crowd, he accidentally hustled him into the recess of the window, where he contrived to mask his view completely by the curtains. The knight of Malta instantly looked out for his friend, but he had already quitted his place. Choisy attached himself to the side of the lady thus deprived of both her guardians.

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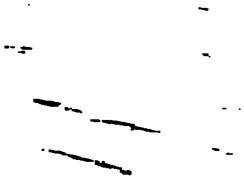

CHAPTER III.

On perceiving the Viscount approach with a smile on his countenance, Madame de Luscourt felt an internal satisfaction which a coquette would have suppressed, and in which vanity had a larger share than sympathy. Her looks brightened as if by enchantment. Scarcely permitting her admirer to finish the compliment he was about to address her, she observed "Are you not afraid of compromising yourself by acknowledging one so little known as I am?" and while pronouncing these words as emphatically as if she had underlined them, her expressive eyes turned resentfully towards a group of females near at hand.

Choisy closely observing this disdainful pantomime, guessed that the provincial beauty had received one of those humiliating rebuffs to which strangers, newly embarked in Parisian society are so often exposed; the proverbial vanity of old France being an absolute phrase. In proportion as the aristocratic principle is banished from our laws, it appears to take refuge in our manners, entrenching itself in a spirit of exclusiveness becoming more confirmed by every successive political shock. That which is called the world in Paris, is composed of a series of drawing rooms. To pass from one to another is a social promotion, sure of provoking envy on the one hand, and malice on the other.

Provincial in all her connections, Madame de Luscourt found herself coldly received in the circle to which she was introduced through the influence of her mother-in-law. Her unquestionable beauty, by at once achieving the conquest of the men, had deprived her of all claim to the benevolent sympathy of her own

sex. Insignificant, she might have been tolerated; but being distinguished, she was a topic of discussion. At this moment, even the group near her, of which every individual had the most obvious reasons for declaring war to pretty faces, was subjecting her to one of those pitiless dissections, like that of a flower pulled leaf from leaf in the hands of the botanist till it remains devoid of colour and perfume.

Readily penetrating their views, Choisy, like a man of experience, resolved to turn it to account. Instead of answering the question addressed to him, he replied by an interrogation.

"My prophecy then is accomplished?" asked he, with a smile.

"What prophecy?" replied Madame de Luscourt, with affected surprise.

"Alas for my humiliation! Is such the value you attach to my words? Did I not tell you, that upon coming to Paris, you need not hope to win the admiration of your own sex?"

"I did not understand you at the time, and still hesitate to believe you. How can I have become an object of aversion, harmless and insignificant as I am? With what can those ladies reproach me, whom I scarcely know, and who seem to be so unkindly busy?"

"You are guilty of many offences, of which you little dream," said the Viscount significantly. "How can you hope to please Madame de la Chatenede for instance, who, till now, boasted the finest eyes in Paris?"

"Have I disparaged her eyes? On the contrary, I admire them, and see none to be compared with them in the room."

"Others have better opportunities, which she will never forgive you."

This compliment was too direct to be misunderstood by Madame de Luscourt.

"I rather think," said she, "that the Gothic fashion of my diamonds, and my unfortunate velvet dress, are bringing down upon me their impertinent scrutiny. I fear I look very ridiculous."

"You would bring ridicule itself into fashion," replied Monsieur de Choisy, with the trite gallantry of a middle aged man. "But since you appeal to my frankness, why, upon the subject of dress, do you not consult your own taste in preference to that of other people."

"What can I do?" said Madame de Luscourt. "This dress is a present from my husband, my diamonds from my mother-in-law; and both are so sacred in my eyes, that were I to look like a shopkeeper's wife of the Rue St. Denis, I should not change them."

To this confidence, accompanied by a look of involuntary irony, the Viscount inclined his head with an air of hypocritical veneration.

"I am silenced!" said he. "The taste of Madame de Luscourt must of course be law. But allow me to suggest another grievance with which you offend the world, and of which, I, more than any one, presume to complain. Why allow your enemies to triumph by refusing every invitation? Yesterday, I expected to see you at Madame Laurencin's."

"My husband was indisposed," said Madame de Luscourt.

"But to-morrow you will come to Madame d'Albenay's ?"

"To-morrow is my mother-in-law's favourite day for being ill."

"How provoking!" said the confidant, with a serious air.

"On Monday, you will at least go to the Opera? They give the Huguenots. I shall take care that you have your favorite box."

Madame de Luscourt hesitated, before she ventured to reply.

"I am quite concerned for the trouble you have taken," said she, somewhat embarrassed, "but pardon me if I do not profit by your offer. For reasons which command my utmost respect, Monsieur de Luscourt does not frequent the theatre. Though my own free agent, it would be little decorous in me to appear less rigid than my husband. Believe me, it is a sacrifice which merits appreciation," said she smiling.

"To a provincial recluse, the Opera presents such temptation! But what merit would there be in renouncing a pleasure for which there was no regret?"

"Monsieur de Luscourt appears little disposed to admit the maxim, 'the husband reigns but does not govern,'" replied the Viscount with a sneer. "His inquisitorial administration descends to details. He has already interdicted novel reading and waltzing. Now, it is the Opera to-morrow it will be dancing; or riding. I am rather surprised he should still tolerate music and embroidery! Be patient; the interdiction will soon arrive. Some would call this tyranny. I only see a very logical system of government, maintained with the most marvellous perseverance. Yes, Monsieur de Luscourt has conquered, I will not say my regard, (you would not believe me,) but my admiration. His policy is as profound as it is courteous. Had he at once overwhelmed you with the weight of his

pretensions, you would have probably resisted. With much foresight, he has proceeded step by step, so that passive obedience, on your part, has become a matter of course. This result is the more admirable, that, in seeing you together, one is more inclined to believe in the mild sway of the queen, than the despotism of the king."

Madame de Luscourt listened to these sarcasms with calmness and without interruption. But she quickly assumed the dignity of a woman who respects herself and the will of her husband.

"I cannot see any thing ridiculous in the fulfilment of a duty," said she, with a serious air. "Besides, it is the advice of Monsieur de Luscourt, and not his dictation in which I acquiesce."

"It is more polite and less hazardous, to advise than to command," replied the wary middle-aged man.

Madame de Luscourt now opened and shut her fan several times with nervous impatience.

While watching this passing cloud, the Viscount relapsed into an air of tender resignation.

"Pardon me," said he in his softest voice, "in speaking of him, I have again disobeyed you. But could I persuade you how much I suffer in seeing you condemned to such seclusion, such slavery, you would be more forbearing with me. Your mother-in-law has transformed your house into an actual fortress, to which I am forced to lay siege, that I may enjoy the happiness of seeing you once in ten times. Must I also give up all hope of meeting you in the world?"

"I believe so," replied Madame de Luscourt, gravely.

"Explain yourself, I entreat!" cried the Viscount.

"Paris pleases neither my husband nor my mother-in-law; and as the minority does not give the law, we depart in two days for the country house of one of my aunts, Madame de Selve. Do you know her?"

"You are actually going away!" exclaimed the Viscount, with the vivacity of a lover of twenty years of age. But he had not time to conclude; for at, that moment, the clerical figure of Monsieur de Luscourt appeared behind his wife, having at last escaped from the insidious civilities of the knight of Malta; and Choisy, compelled to enter into general conversation, soon bowed and left the room.

Shortly after, Choisy accosted a middle aged man, who was passing the evening in perambulating from one room to another; bowing, smiling, simpering, shaking hands, and saying civil things to every body in turn.

"D'Agost!" said he, "I wish to write a letter. Where shall I find all I want?"

"In my study," replied the master of the house. "Go there, and you will find some small rose-coloured paper, which I suspect is what you want."

"Precisely!"

The two men exchanged a smile of intelligence, and d'Agost resumed his civilities; while the Viscount, preceded by a servant, ascended to the second story, on descending from which, about twenty minutes afterwards, he returned to the drawing-room, where he found the newly married couple precisely in the position in which he had left them. Monsieur de Luscourt had taken root behind his wife's chair, who, regardless of his presence, was playing with her bouquet, with an air of absence of mind.

"Decidedly he is insupportable!" thought her admirer. "But he must be a good sentinel if he prevent this letter from reaching its address."

To convey a note to a married woman, in the presence of her husband, if she be willing to receive it, is a feat worthy of a school-boy; neither does forcing her to accept it against her will, offer any insurmountable difficulty. The

feats of the Viscount of that nature rendered the present an affair of mere experience. Having decided his plans, he seated himself by the side of Madame de Luscourt.

"Could the envy of the world secure a triumph, yours is indeed complete," said he, with an insidious smile. "Your very bouquet is the subject of jealousy."

The Viscount held out his hand for the object to which he alluded, admired it, inhaled the perfume, examined the flowers one after the other, then, with a dexterity worthy of a conjuror, inserted the tiny rose-coloured note under the petals of a beautiful camellia! Enchanted with his own adroitness, he returned the bouquet to Madame de Luscourt, who presented it to her husband, as if to punish, by a piece of conjugal coquetry, the rash familiarity of her admirer.

"Maxime," said she, "all these compliments are your due. See how they approve your taste."

The ingenuous husband inserted his nose amongst the precious exotics, without perceiving in the midst of them a slight odour of amber, which announced the hidden snake in the grass. In spite of his self-possession, Monsieur de Choisy felt alarmed on seeing his note in the possession of the husband; and inclining towards the guileless woman, whispered,

"Take back your bouquet!" Madame de Luscourt looked surprised. "Open it when alone, you will then understand me," said the Viscount de Choisy.

Agitated by these mysterious words, the young wife instinctively extended her hand to her husband; but at the moment he acquiesced in that mute demand, the intervention of a fourth personage gave a new feature to the scene. Like one of those malicious fairies, who in a fairy-tale, appear when least expected, the old Marchioness de la Gardagne presented herself suddenly behind her daughter-in-

law's chair. With an eagerness remarkable for her age, she grasped the insidious bouquet, before the former was able to lay hold of it; giving the Viscount a look, which almost put the man of the world out of countenance.

"Where the deuce does she start from?" said he to himself. "Impossible that she should have seen me! But these old hags have an instinct of mischief equivalent to a sixth sense."

Recovering his self-possession, he offered his arm-chair to the old lady, with the most formal politeness; but while thanking him with icy politeness, instead of sitting down, she addressed her daughter-in-law:

"Your carriage is waiting," said she; "shall we go?"

Madame de Luscourt rose without answering, and looked alternately at the bouquet and the Viscount, whom she dared not interrogate. An expressive glance from him soon prompted that marvellous presence of mind which, in

sudden perplexities, endows the sex with such wonderful superiority. Leaning her hand upon the back of her chair, she let fall the boa she had placed there. Monsieur de Choisy, quickly picked up the fallen sable, and in order to present it, leant closely towards her, indifferent to the observations of the old Marchioness.

"What does all this mean?" briefly inquired Madame de Luscourt.

"I have written what I dared not utter!" replied he.

"How?—a letter?"

"And concealed, alas! in the bouquet."

Collecting himself, Choisy now took leave of the party, completed by the arrival of Monsieur de Beaupré. Madame de Luscourt forgot her admirer as soon as departed, and only thought of recovering her bouquet. She succeeded without even a request, her mother-in-law giving it to her as soon as they were side by side in the carriage. But it was in vain she searched the flowers: she found nothing.

"He only wanted to frighten me!" thought she; "and I was stupid to have imagined him in earnest. He can have nothing to write, and must be aware that I am not a woman to read that to which I should not think proper to listen."

CHAPTER IV.

THAT evening, or rather that night, no sooner was Madame de Gardagne alone, than she carefully emptied her pockets; immense sacks in which she could deposit her lap-dog, without personal inconvenience. On this occasion, in addition to her purse and snuff-box, she drew forth the tiny rose-coloured note! Her withered hand seemed to grate the surface of the vellum, as she opened it; and after placing her spectacles upon her nose, began to read it—a humiliation little anticipated by the Viscount.

Having deciphered the tender epistle with the utmost minuteness of attention, the Mar-

chioness relapsed into a meditation too important to the development of this recital, not to demand attention.

Madame de Gardagne was one of those cold, harsh, serious women, whose manners are rather the result of sad experience of life, than natural austerity of character. Twice married, she had tasted the bitterest lees of the cup into which a short honeymoon sheds deceitful sweetness.

Her first husband, the Count de Luscourt, a nobleman of the old school, an indefatigable sportsman, a hard drinker, a prodigal—gallant with the ladies, even with his wife—terminated his existence in a duel at the age of fifty; realizing one of those destinies which reduce the task of the genealogists, to a name and a couple of dates.

Exceeding the aristocratic delinquencies of his predecessor, Monsieur de Gardagne had ruined himself at play; and fortunately for his wife, a timely death interposed to save her

dower from the gulph from which neither fame nor fortune return. A bitter want of faith in the possibility of happiness, a sincere contempt for men, justified by double experience, constituted the dower with which she entered widowhood for the second time. On the other hand, the tree of misfortune had put forth wholesome fruits. Taking refuge in religion, the consolation of suffering hearts, Madame de Gardagne had acquired, on the flinty road of fate, an experience never found in a path of flowers. Religion and knowledge of the business of life simultaneously developed themselves in her mind. Without losing sight of heaven, the supreme consolation, she engaged in the complicated duties caused by a double widowhood, as well as the care of an only son, the issue of her first marriage. Renouncing all hope of personal happiness, she concentrated her solicitude upon this her only child. In a few years, one of those female administrations, which more than one economist

might accept as model, closed the breach made, by paternal prodigality, in the inheritance of young Luscourt. The redemption of her son's fortune would have seemed to her the first of worldly duties; but that a duty superior to the claim of positive interests, pervaded every faculty of her soul.

To render Maxime a being wholly different from the two husbands assigned her by the wrath of destiny, became, for Madame de Gardagne, the most important care of her existence.

The faults of her two husbands had always appeared the result of the frivolous education of the French nobility, previous to the revolution; and the Marchioness, passing to another extreme, fell into the errors of excessive severity. Immured till the age of twenty in a secluded country house, in the heart of the Nivernais, the youth of Maxime was sheltered from the corruption of the age under the shield of maternal solicitude, while pursuing his studies under the eye of a priest, as

learned as he was austere. As the custom of the times compelled her to adopt the rules of university education, Madame de Gardagne at length conducted her son to Paris, where she did not lose sight of him an instant during the period of his more critical studies. Every day, at the termination of his studies at the College as well as afterwards at the School of Law, the spotless lamb returned to the fold which his mother had provided him in a retired street near the Church of St. Sulpice. At twenty three years of age, he took the degree of licentiate; ignorant, except by name, of the resorts usually frequented by the young students of Paris.

The projects of the Marchioness had thus fully succeeded. In return for her solicitude, too, she had secured the most profound gratitude on the part of her charge; the most unlimited obedience, and a respect worthy of the olden time. After steering safely through the Parisian archipelago, in which so many youthful fortunes are wrecked, the mother's next

desire was to complete her work by steering her new Telemachus into the salutary port of marriage. She thought it right and prudent that the finer feelings of the heart should no longer remain inactive under an abnegation as unnatural as perilous. The youth of Maxime had been wasting in a garden undecked with flowers. It was time the fragrant rose should embellish this arid sterility.

Her choice soon fixed itself upon Mademoiselle de Beaupré, who, to the endowments of birth and fortune, added those of beauty. She had been brought up in the country; a paramount advantage in the estimation of her mother-in-law, who indulged in a provincial prejudice against girls brought up in Paris. Maxime, in this instance, exhibited the implicit docility to which he had been constant from his infancy; and as the woman to whom he was to be united was charming, the fulfilment of a duty promised to be the source of genuine happiness.

Marriage emancipates women from maternal restraint. Brought up like a girl, Maxime had some right to the benefit of the law, and in equity, his mother resolved not to contest it. Madame de Gardagne saw, however, that the power she had till then possessed, would be usurped by the influence of another; and though the mother would have abdicated without regret, the mother-in-law exercised more imperious pretensions, than ever, to the family throne.

The education of Madame de Luscourt offered, in every particular, a direct contrast to that of her husband. Deprived from childhood of maternal care, she had always lived in the country with Monsieur de Beaupré; and the dictatorial habits of the portly gentleman ended in imparting a certain independence to the manners of his daughter.

Till her marriage, Flavie de Beaupré evinced little taste for the accomplishments in which young ladies usually excel. awkward

with her needle and pencil, and held the piano in supreme contempt. To make amends, she rode with an intrepidity recalling the fable of the amazons; shot flying—and, thanks to the lessons of her father, handled the foils like a Bradamante. In a word, she excelled in all the exercises which Madame de Gardagne, in her maternal foresight, had interdicted to her son.

So complete a contrast in the habits of the newly married couple was somewhat embarrassing; and for some time, they contemplated each other with a curiosity bordering upon anxiety. In the most daring flights of his imagination, Maxime had foreseen in his wife some gentle sister of the angelic choir; while Flavie, on the contrary, had never dreamt of a future husband but with a sword flashing in his hand. The young man was well content to exchange his visions for so charming a reality; but Madame de Luscourt was less prompt in the modification of her opinions.

The rare qualities of her husband, his filial obedience, his exaltation of character, and his strict religious observances, commanded involuntary respect. But she was not blind to the wretchedness of his seat on horseback, or to his timidity of manner. From this consciousness, resulted a feeling more akin to pity than to love, in which some particles of irony occasionally insinuated themselves. In a short time, Flavie conceived an invincible aversion to the qualities which at first commanded her profound veneration. The almost monastic rigidity of Monsieur de Luscourt seemed a reproof to the genuine, though less austere piety in which she had been reared. Every night, did Maxime prolong his prayers and meditations; still his wife, content only with rational piety, could not but consider these conjugal orisons an hour or two too long. On Sundays, the high mass at which his wife attended, did not suffice for Maxime, who returned to vespers, and

could scarcely tear himself away at the conclusion of the service.

"I am almost afraid," thought she, "he would have done better to take holy orders than enter the estate of matrimony."

Poets have sometimes maintained that women are visible angels, intermediating between man and the divinity; and, by a tacit acquiescence, mankind have conceded this polite error. A woman will consequently pardon all superiority in a husband save that which infringes her divine prerogative.

The most intolerant devotee bends to the control of a sinner she is likely to convert, sooner than to a saint whose example is a reproof, preferring to give the example, rather than receive it. Madame de Luscourt grew impatient under the supremacy of virtue she was perpetually compelled to acknowledge. Her husband's ascetic perfection, and the scrupulous discharge of his religious duties, seemed so many feathers plucked from her angelic wings.

In spite of the frankness and vivacity of her character, the young wife contrived to mask her progressive displeasure under a semblance of humility and deference towards her husband of which *he* was the dupe. But Madame de Gardagne, on seeing the clouded state of the conjugal horizon, experienced considerable anxiety.

There exist in the world, individuals who assume towards women the cruel despotism of birds of prey towards the more timid of the feathered tribe. As we have already intimated the Viscount de Choisy was one of these vultures, ever hovering over guileless innocence and unsuspecting virtue. Conformably to the habits of the day, he had pity upon the unmarried portion of the sex; though there *were* occasions in which his self-denial made exceptions. Residing in the neighbourhood of Monsieur de Beaupré, he had manifested towards Flavie only the most careless attentions; but on her marriage, she suddenly

assumed the value of a diamond in the hands of an expert lapidary. To the Viscount, Madame de Luscourt presented a triumph to be achieved, as uniting all the qualities which tend to gratify self-love and vanity, the supreme stimulus of lady killers. The project of this modern Don Juan was instantly decided. A favourable opportunity was alone wanting, and the journey of the newly married couple to Paris being decided, without loss of time he set to work.

At forty, the chances of such success are doubtful. The nobler portal of the heart is open only to youth; though the various caprices of feminine vanity offer encouragement too frequently to the pretensions of male flirts. The Viscount adopted a system of persuasive gallantry, which, though in appearance tame, took an oblique line not unlikely to attain its object. While aiming at the part of a lover, he contented himself with that of confi-

dant; a part of secondary importance in appearance, but possessing innumerable resources for those who know how to profit by them.

By degrees, in spite of the vigilance of the mother-in-law and the sanctimoniousness of the husband, Madame de Luscourt became engaged with him in terms of intimacy, limited at first to an exchange of insignificant gossip such as usually forms the staple of fashionable conversation; but which daily assumed a more serious tone, renouncing the passing fancies of the mind for the outpourings of sentiment. The respectable age of Monsieur de Choisy, his craftiness of mind, his persuasive manners, and more than all, his profound knowledge of the sex, permitted him to take up a position in which many more skilful champions might have failed. Under the pretence of doing the honours of Paris to the provincials, he established his intimacy in the family; and we have seen at what cost of

broken-kneed horses, heads of game, and games of boston, he purchased his footing in the house.

Applying the rules of military art to his present siege, the Viscount began by mining the three formidable bastions with which Madame de Luscourt was flanked. The mother-in-law was dismantled without firing a shot; thanks to the spirit of revolt peculiar to daughters-in-law, in which the besieger had found a powerful auxiliary. The husband still held firm, but the constant praises of the merits of Maxime by his young wife appeared almost an affectation. As to Monsieur de Beaupré, any precaution on his account was quite superfluous, for the lusty gentleman belonged to that class of fathers of families, who as soon as their daughters are married, think they have accomplished their paternal duties, and say in the joy of their heart, "the rest regards my son-in-law."

At the period of the commencement of this

recital, Monsieur de Choisy had so dexterously managed these preliminaries, that he fancied all scruples as to a declaration were unnecessary. In abstaining from an explicit avowal, he seemed rather to forego a right, than submit to a necessity. Congratulating himself on the ground he had gained, he was satisfied with his slow, but gradual progress, as a traveller pauses to view the landscape at leisure.

The sudden announcement of Madame de Luscourt's departure, however, induced him no longer to temporize. The Viscount felt that he must anticipate the coming blow; and the result was the letter which was now causing such acute uneasiness to the mother of Maxime.

CHAPTER V.

MADAME DE GARDAGNE sat reflecting upon the Viscount's letter with profound attention. After reading it, she was on the point of committing it to the flames; but she suddenly locked it up as carefully, as though she had been a beauty, and the billet a love-letter of her own.

"It is the first," said she; "my fears are relieved! But my vigilance may not always be equally successful. This man is of the most unceasing perseverance. Obstacles only serve to incite him. How am I to act? How ward off the misfortune which threatens my son? In spite of his piety, Maxime is a man of spirit; and had he the least suspicion, I am convinced

he would insult this reckless hero. A duel must ensue, in which he would fall like his father. I could not survive such an ordeal! One does not mourn for a son as for a husband, —one dies of grief!—These professed gallants are, after all, so many assassins! Monsieur de Beaupré has boasted to me of Monsieur de Choisy's prowess, and my poor boy has never had a lesson in fencing. Maxime shall know nothing of it. His noble, innocent soul is unfitted for such torments. I will protect him. Flavie is only a coquette. There may be time to check the disease before it invades her mind and heart. Not a moment is to be lost. In a few days, it were perhaps too late!"

To rekindle in the soul of her daughter-in-law, in the absence of conjugal love, the principles of duty so nearly extinct, was her first object; and among those around her to whom she could look for support, she fixed upon Monsieur de Beaupré, her natural ally on a family question.

"What think you of Monsieur de Choisy?" said she to the old gentleman, taking him aside after breakfast.

"Of Choisy? an excellent fellow!" replied he, "a bit of a coxcomb, but a safe friend. They accuse him of giving himself airs, but *I* have nothing to say against him. He has the finest horses in Paris, and I ride them whenever it suits me."

"Do you esteem his character?"

"Of course I do. A man who lends his horses like a true friend! Look at his stable! —a palace!—all marble and mahogany.—His horses are small, indeed, or possibly I am a *leetle* heavy."

"I want your opinion of his character, not of his horses," interrupted Madame de Gardagne.

"A capital fellow, as I told you before.—I am to ride Mario this morning, for the first time. I wonder he is not here."

The Marchioness grew impatient.

"Cannot you answer me seriously? The question I put to you has a serious motive, to which you would do well to attend.—Is it possible you have never noticed the assiduities of Monsieur de Choisy towards——"

"His assiduities? He hardly comes here;" replied Flavie's father.

The dowager smiled ironically.

"While you ride his horses or shoot his rabbits," said she, "he is sure not to meet you. But I tell you that he comes here *much* too often, and that his visits have been remarked. Flavie is too beautiful for the attentions of Monsieur de Choisy not to receive an ill founded interpretation. Yesterday evening, for instance, they were the topic of severe observations."

"Mere envy! Because Choisy is successful in the world."

"In our house, at least, his success shall be moderate. In a word," continued the Marchioness, "the conduct of Monsieur de Choisy

is such as, if it do not commit Flavie, must at least embarrass her, which is a sufficient reason for any step I may take. To-morrow we go into the country to Madame de Selve. It is useless to attempt anything in the interim. But at our return to Paris, I beg you will make the Viscount understand that his visits would be more agreeable if less frequent."

"Lucky enough," replied Beaupré, "for I asked him to pass a fortnight at my sister-in-law's."

"You have actually invited him?" exclaimed Madame de Gardagne. "In that case, we will not go."

"Come, come, my dear Marchioness, do not mount the high horse!" cried Beaupré, good-humouredly. "Why select Monsieur de Choisy more than many others who admire Flavie? Believe me, he is a thousand leagues from any idea of that sort. He has too much to think of. I can speak pertinently upon the subject, for I possess his confidence.

First of all, he is going to be married, not to mention the little girl at the Opera—and very pretty she is. Pardon me, I forgot you knew nothing of that kind. How should he think of Flavie, whom he has known from a child? He is not more attentive to her than he is to other women; and let me tell you, that, as far as that goes, your son would do well to take him for a model, for really poor Luscourt is far from gallant! A regular soldier of the Pope. Flavie told me yesterday—"

"What did she tell you?"

"Nothing of any consequence—mere childishness. After all, if she found Choisy more amusing in conversation last night than your sanctimonious son, it is no crime. It is not for such absurdities I will close my doors against a friend of twenty years' standing, and who has the first horses in Paris. Here is a specimen," said Monsieur de Beaupré, advancing to the window, and his eye fixed upon a full bred horse, led by the groom of Monsieur

de Choisy. In a moment, the old gentleman took up his hat, whip, and gloves, previously laid upon a chair.

"I never keep a good horse waiting; it is a matter of principle with me," said he. "Pray, dear Marchioness, cease bothering my brain with these absurdities. At our age, we must leave young people to themselves. I have delegated my paternal power to Maxime; the rest is his affair. 'Never hazard your finger twixt bark and wood,' says the proverb; and I have sworn never to interfere betwixt my son-in-law and his wife."

"Egotist!" muttered Madame de Gardagne, as soon as he was gone. "Provided he get his riding and shooting, what signifies the rest?"

Finding it in vain to seek the support of Monsieur de Beaupré, the Marchioness remained thoughtful and undetermined. At length, she made up her mind, and proceeded

to a little sitting-room, where she found her daughter-in-law occupied in reading the newspaper.

On seeing her mother-in-law, Madame de Luscourt rose, and offered her easy chair to the old lady. Madame de Gardagne usually accepted this place of honour with the dignity of a dowager of high and noble lineage, in the assertion of her precedence. But this time, she refused.

"Do not disturb yourself, my child," said she, graciously taking another chair. "Why keep your room this divine weather? I thought you were airing with Maxime. The Boulevarts are, I am sure, covered with equipages."

"It is Sunday, is it not?" replied Flavie, coldly. "Maxime is, doubtless, gone to vespers, and I shall pass my day in the English fashion; only that instead of reading sermons, I venture on a newspaper. Rather worldly,

I fear; and when you opened the door, I thought of hiding it, lest it might be my husband."

"You make out poor Maxime more strict than he really is. I do not suppose he forbids your reading what you like."

"Pardon me," said the young wife. "Yesterday, I sent for a new novel; this morning, Maxime, upon finding it on my table, sent it back to the library."

"That was rather despotic, I admit. But in your place," said the Marchioness, trying to smile, "I should deem it a proof of affection, more than any thing else. After all, dear Flavie, there are better books than the last new novel. In seeking to direct your taste in the choice of your studies, Maxime testifies a mark of respect. Cannot you see this?"

"Yes, I understand it all, appreciate it all, submit to it all. If required, I will return to fairy tales, and nursery rhymes."

"I wish to consult you, my dear child, on the

subject of our departure," interrupted the Marchioness, in a persuasive voice.

"I do not see the use of giving my opinion upon a thing almost decided," replied Madame de Luscourt.

"Which means that the journey does not suit you?"

"On the contrary, I rejoice in it. The country in March is delicious. It is true the trees have no leaves, but on the other hand, there is plenty of snow. One may at least enjoy the pleasures of the fireside. How inconceivable that people persist in remaining in Paris till the end of the carnival!"

Since she had become acquainted with Monsieur Beaupré s invitation to the Viscount, Madame de Gardagne looked forward with horror to the projected journey. In spite of her severity of conscience, she concealed the motive of her change of mind; attributing to her son the merit of a decision which she thought might be agreeable to his young wife.

"This sudden passion for the country is inopportune," replied she smiling; "how will you manage? Maxime desires to remain in Paris, thinking it might not be disagreeable to you."

"My duty is to obey," replied Flavie, also smiling, for her ill humour vanished at this unexpected intelligence.

The countenance of the young wife having resumed its usual serenity, a symptom which a skilful diplomatist ought never to undervalue, the Marchioness found herself more embarrassed than at the beginning of the conversation; but her hesitation was brief, for active minds decide rapidly, though they may afterwards repent their precipitation. Till now, she had avoided, in conversing with her daughter-in-law, all reference to the Viscount, knowing full well that to speak of a man gives him consequence, and that contradiction often confirms ill-disposed feelings. But she now determined to put the heart of Flavie to the test.

"It is settled then, that we remain in Paris,"

said she. "In the course of the summer, we shall find means of paying our visit to your aunt. It would have been a pity not to be here for the wedding of Mademoiselle de Cheneceaux."

"It will be magnificent," replied Flavie, "I heard of nothing else at Madame d'Agost's."

"Spring is decidedly the season for marriages," replied Madame de Gardagne; "yesterday, I heard of half-a-dozen, of which the only one I remember is that of our friend Monsieur de Choisy.—Did you hear of it?"

Flavie replied to this interrogation with a look of defiance; while a nervous tremor of the lips succeeded to her previous smiles.

"Monsieur de Choisy about to be married?" said she. "To whom?"

"I have not heard," replied the dowager, pretending not to perceive the anxiety of her daughter-in-law, "but the thing is certain. Monsieur de Choisy has already informed your father of it."

"True," said Flavie, recovering her smiles, and this time speaking with irony, "his marriage with Mademoiselle Villemars,—an old story."

"Old or new, it appears certain, and all the world approves Monsieur de Choisy's abandonment of the school of romance for that of reality."

"Does he really write romances?" inquired Madame de Luscourt, unable to suppress a look of incredulity.

"I forgot you liked that kind of reading, or I should not have made use of the word to define what is the very reverse of romantic," said the Marchioness. "Actresses and figurantes are apt to prefer the positive to the ideal."

"Monsieur de Choisy, then, has an attachment for an actress?" said the young wife, whose indignation now betrayed itself by a crimson blush.

"She is perhaps a singer or dancer, I know not which. Your father is my informant. But your expression is not applicable. At Monsieur de Choisy's age, passion is out of the question."

"There are young men equally unimpassioned," replied Flavie abruptly.

And the Marchioness could not but understand this direct retort upon her son.

"You will allow," said she, "that with a young and pure heart, there is a fairer chance than with one prematurely withered. Though Monsieur de Choisy be a little too mellow to play the gay gallant, he may still make a most excellent husband. At forty-five, it is time to be reasonable."

"You mean thirty-five!" observed Madame de Luscourt, suppressing with difficulty her peevishness.

"Forty-five, if not more. Remember that Monsieur de Choisy is as coquettish about his

looks as a middle-aged woman. Madame d'Agost assured me the other day that he wears stays. Did you ever perceive it?"

"There are many awkward men in the world who would do well to follow his example."

"Unfortunately there is no repairing the pitiless havoc of time," resumed Madame de Gardagne. "The Viscount ages. Yesterday, I watched him closely and discovered signs of maturity, which I had not previously remarked. His hair is getting wonderfully gray."

Flavie remarked with emphasis,

"In *him* one never notices such trifling defects. Monsieur de Choisy is clever, distinguished, amiable, and were I a man, he would be my model." Then, by way of changing the conversation, "As we do not go to Selve," said she, "it would be as well to inform my aunt, who expects us. With your permission, I will write to her."

Without waiting for her mother-in-law's answer, Madame de Luscourt left the room,

slamming the door with puerile impatience. Women are sometimes more vexed by the discovery of their follies, than of their sentiments; and being well versed in the subtile mysteries of feminine organisation, the Marchioness felt much satisfaction in witnessing the ill humour of her daughter-in-law.

"If she really liked him," thought she, "she would be more cautious. Were she to blame, her language would be less irritable. Since she resents, she is irreproachable!"

As the old lady made this inference, the door of the drawing room suddenly opened, and Monsieur de Choisy was announced!

CHAPTER VI.

THE man of fashion advanced with a gracious air, without betraying disappointment, at perceiving that a third person was to be present at the interview; while, at sight of the being, whom she regarded as a prowling wolf, the Marchioness determined upon one of those measures before which prudence recoils, but which are sometimes prompted by the exigency of the moment.

"It is a hopeless case with Monsieur de Beaupré," thought she, receiving with an ambiguous smile, the compliments of the Viscount. "He would sell his daughter for a horse, or his soul for a buck. To speak rationally to Flavie,

would be the very means to urge her to some imprudence. My son must know nothing, for with the education he has received, his intervention would be only prejudicial; it is therefore to this man I will address myself. Monsieur de Choisy!" said she, cutting short the graceful courtesies of the Viscount, "I rejoice in the opportunity of speaking to you alone. I desire your advice upon a subject which, in consideration of my provincial prejudices, I fear you will judge too severely. It would flatter me to find the opinion of a man like yourself, whose foible is not that of strict severity, in accordance with my own."

"Plague take the old woman," thought the Viscount; "does she take me for a casuist? What the devil are her confidences to *me*? Pray proceed, Madam," said he, more respectfully; "but in truth, I fear that, in consulting me, you do too much honour to my feeble judgment."

"What should you think," said the Mar-

chioness, "of a man who, after being introduced into a family upon the sacred plea of friendship, taking advantage of the confidence reposed in him, should, in return for the hospitality, he receives, be guilty of a design as treacherous as it is deliberate."

"A hit!" thought Choisy, though his countenance was not the least embarrassed. "The crime to which you allude, Madam," said he, "is one of such frequent occurrence in the world, that to presume to judge the question, one must be oneself irreproachable. Unfortunately such is not my position; and as you rightly observed just now, rigidity would ill become me. Permit me therefore to decline expressing an opinion. I have enough to do with the examination of my own conscience, without presuming to animadvert on the errors of others."

"I did not require any examination of your conscience," said Madame de Gardagne, with perfect imperturbability. "On the contrary,

I will at once admit the man to whom I allude, to be yourself. Do not deny it. Suffice it that you have already warranted my doubts of your delicacy of feeling. I will deal frankly with you. For these last six months, you have been paying attentions to Madame de Luscourt—"

"Can you believe, Madam, that——"

"Excuse me, Sir, I am an old fashioned woman, unacquainted with the intrigues of society; you, a man of acknowledged skill and experience. The advantage is therefore on your side, but do not presume too much upon your superiority. On certain points, women never grow old, and seldom fail in their judgment. I repeat to you, your conduct for six months has been most reprehensible. Dare you deny it?"

To this close inquiry, to which a fixed and penetrating eye imparted an imposing authority, the Viscount felt that all denegation would be superfluous. His vanity

rebelled against playing the school boy who descends to a lie to escape the cane of the usher.

" Since you exact the avowal, Madam," said he, " however strange it may appear, I own that I much admire Madame de Luscourt."

" Your declaration will never reach her through *me*," said the old lady, " spare yourself therefore the trouble of deceit. You cannot swear, your hand upon your heart, that you truly love Madame de Luscourt?"

" How Madam! do you doubt the sincerity of my admiration for her?"

" To save time, I will admit your sentiments to be genuine. Forget for a moment that I am her mother-in-law and let us discuss the question, as if not individually concerned in it. I can understand such a sentiment to exist in extreme youth; but at your age, Monsieur de Choisy, with your usage of the world and acute turn of mind, how am I to believe you the dupe of such self-delusion? No! you

do not love her, I maintain it; it is your vanity and not your heart that speaks. If report speak only half the truth, you are somewhat weary of your Parisian triumphs; Madame de Luscourt, fresh and beautiful, and new, presents a fit interlude to vary the monotony of your ordinary triumphs and diversions."

"Alas! Madam!" said the middle-aged swain, "in how odious a point of view do you regard my conduct!"

"Odious, indeed!" exclaimed Madame de Gardagne; "and my great ambition is to make you share in my opinion. You perceive that I have anticipated your designs; I need scarcely explain my own. You will find in me a vigilant, untiring adversary. It is not in the cause of virtue that I take up the defence of outraged morality; but as a mother defending the character of her child — which is more precious than her life. The question stands clear before us. I look upon you as an

enemy. I shall be upon my guard. Be frank in your turn, and tell me what are your hopes?"

"I respect Madame de Luscourt too much to have even dared to hope," replied the Viscount, less unconstrained.

"An honest sentiment, for which I give you credit!" said the mother of Maxime. "You admit such hopes to be an outrage? To what then do you pretend! I cannot much fancy you to be a man capable of the disinterested gallantry of a knight errant."

Instead of answering, Monsieur de Choisy smiled with an affectation that scarcely concealed his embarrassment.

"How bad must be your cause!" resumed Madame de Gardagne, drawing the slip knot of her argument tighter and tighter. "You cannot utter a word that does not turn against yourself! Still, I appreciate your respect for my daughter-in-law. I would never have pardoned your bad opinion of her. Madame

de Luscourt is full of feeling and honour, with judgment beyond her age; and her strong good sense replaces the maturer experience of age. I have full confidence in her. Do not, therefore, attribute to a mistrust at which she would be justly indignant, a step entirely arising from my sense of propriety. The opinions of the world are so rash, that one cannot be too cautious in averting them. 'The wife of Cæsar must not be suspected.'"

"Now for some choice examples from ancient history!" thought the Viscount. "What chance have I against this virtuous matron, who has the courage to compare her asinine son with imperial Cæsar!"

The Marchioness paused, as if to give her listener time to reply. But as Choisy remained silent, she resumed in a more gracious tone:

"My sermon is long, is it not? I see you are weary of my moralities. I feel myself to be the person you detest most in the world, and would not leave such impressions on your

mind. Though old, I am coquettish, and hold that your hatred be not too deep. Perhaps, Monsieur de Choisy, we may still be friends. Though I doubted the reality of your passion, I never doubted that of your honour. One word from *you* would end this painful subject. Come, come! Set my mind at ease. Are there not pretty women enough in Paris, who would be proud of the attentions which you now fruitlessly lavish upon another? See what egotistical, worldly arguments you compel me to use! But Heaven will pardon the sin, in consideration of the motive. Shew me then, that in believing you accessible to nobler feelings, I am not mistaken. The esteem of an old woman is but a poor reward for the generous conduct I expect from you. But you have admitted that you are hopeless; why, therefore, prefer the humiliation of disappointment, to the merit of self-denial?"

During this peroration, cheerfully pronounced by the Marchioness, Choisy had been

occupied in twisting one of the buttons of his waistcoat.

"It is written that old women will ever be fatal to the victorious!" thought he, with suppressed rage. Every syllable of the sexagenarian Marchioness had fallen upon him vertically, like the tile which ended the days of Pyrrhus.

"I am beaten out of the field, and an honourable retreat is my only resource, Madam," said he; "your appeal to my honour shall not be made in vain. You judged severely in attributing my conduct to cold calculation, and not to the ardour of passion. But as my transgression is not the less heinous, I do not attempt to justify myself. To confess my fault, is to tell you that I am ready to atone it. Speak, Madam! What do you require of me? I am prepared to obey."

"Monsieur de Choisy," replied the Marchioness, "you speak like a man of honour! I am happy to find I judged you rightly."

"What do you exact of me?" inquired the Viscount, affecting to conceal, under a smile of resignation, his bitter disappointment. "Do you banish me from the country? Am I to fly to Germany, England, or Italy? If you choose, I will fall ill, as a pretext for boring myself to death at Hyeres!"

"I do not doubt your talent for dissimulation," replied Madame de Gardagne, laughing; "but to say the truth, you do not look like a man in a decline. Besides, I do not wish to interfere with your plans and projects. Your word of honour is sufficient. I exact nothing, not even that you diminish the number of your visits. So sudden a change in your relations with us, might be remarked. There is a prudence of conduct, a discretion of deportment, which you may easily adopt, without any particular suggestion of mine. Be sure, my dear Monsieur de Choisy, that which appears so difficult now to accomplish, will one day be a source of pure and unmixed satisfaction to you,

and you will learn to thank me. In the mean while, I must forgive a little resentment. I cannot expect your reformation to be immediate."

The middle-aged dandy rose to take leave.

"Madam," said he, with an air of profound respect, "if ever I marry, it is to your suggestions I will refer myself for a wife."

"You think me lucky, then, in my selections?" said the Marchioness, with a malicious smile.

"Spare me your reproof!" cried Choisy, reddening.

"I am to blame," she replied. "You conduct yourself so well, that I ought to respect your feelings. Pardon my being in high spirits, for it is to you I owe them; and let us part friends."

Monsieur de Choisy advanced to accept the proffered hand, and pressed it to his lips with a respectful energy to which the Dowager was far from insensible.

"Adieu!" said she. "Depart in peace, and sin no more."

Again bowing with the grace peculiar to the men of the old court, the Viscount left the room. As he opened the door, he perceived Madame de Luscourt standing in the dining-room, apparently just arrived. The undulation of her gown seemed to indicate that she had suddenly halted. Choisy instantly closed the door, and advanced towards the Countess, whose cheeks were of a vermillion dye; then, eagerly seizing her hand, he placed in it a letter which he drew from his pocket. Choisy was not partial to the epistolary system, so dear to novices in love. But he knew that after one step on the road, it was difficult to pause; love-letters succeeding better by their quantity than their quality.

Madame de Luscourt was for a moment startled, and her cheeks assumed a still deeper hue. Without uttering a word, but with a movement expressive of vexation and resent-

ment, she dashed the note upon the floor. The Viscount did not attempt to pick it up, the sudden entrance of a servant compelling him to retire; but turning towards the door, and with the most admirable self-possession, he disappeared, not without having remarked the Countess conceal the note by placing her foot upon it.

After the disappearance of the middle-aged Lothario, Flavie, dismissing the servant, picked up the note, and entered the drawing-room.

"What is the matter?" inquired Madame de Gardagne. "Your dazzling colour and sparkling eyes speak wonders!"

"I am come to confess a fault which you will, I trust, pardon," replied the young wife, in a tremulous voice. "I was *there!*" said she, pointing to the door. "I heard all that passed between you and Monsieur de Choisy."

The Marchioness listened to this communication without the slightest embarrassment.

"You heard that which was little likely to please you," she replied.

"I heard only that I possessed the best and most indulgent of mothers!" replied Flavie, giving way to her emotion.

"Enough—enough, my dear child," interrupted the kind mother-in-law, in the most affectionate tone. "Thank God, we have neither of us forgotten our duty, and I trust that Choisy will fulfil his, for I believe him to be sincere."

"Here is a proof of his sincerity!" said Flavie, with a tremulous voice, offering the treacherous note to her mother-in-law.

The Marchoiness started from her seat; her countenance suddenly assuming an expression of anger and indignation.

"So then, he was deceiving me!" said she, eagerly. "Some good angel must have

prompted him to such conduct, for now you cannot do otherwise than despise him!"

"I hate him!" replied the Countess, more and more excited. "I may have been thoughtless, unguarded, coquettish, perhaps; but never did I give him the right to outrage me thus. His mode of forcing me to receive this letter was in itself an act of violence. It is the first he has addressed me, and you see that I have not read it."

"It is the second!" gravely replied the Marchioness, producing the former one; "and I must confess that I have been less discreet than yourself."

On finding her mother so well acquainted with their proceedings, Flavie raised her eyes to heaven, as if in gratitude for its protection. Madame de Gardagne took the two epistles as if she were about to cast them into the fire.

"If you burn them, will he not think that

I have read them, and that I keep them?" said the young wife, retaining her arm.

"Right, my dear child," resumed the old lady. "But you cannot return them yourself. Be it my business,"

Madame de Gardagne immediately put the letters into her pocket, then bidding her daughter-in-law sit beside her, took her hands in hers, and in terms of endearing affection, offered the most parental advice. She spoke with all the eloquence habitual to women, when expatiating upon the sentiments of the heart, and in requital for her maternal tenderness, received an answer as unexpected as it was rational.

"Dear mother, let us set out for Luscourt. Paris has no charms for me. Here life appears to teem with perfidious allurements. I require tranquillity and solitude. I long to escape from this dangerous vortex, in which my head reels. I long to be with you, my father, and

Maxime, who alone truly love me. Let us go, I implore you."

"Yes, dear Flavie, we will go, since you require it," answered Madame de Gardagne, too happy in receiving a proposition which at the moment was hovering on her own lips. Her plans had succeeded beyond her hopes.

CHAPTER VII.

On that day, contrary to his usual habits, Maxime de Luscourt was late for dinner. At length, he made his appearance, half famished, but full of spiritual nourishment from a sermon preached by the Abbé Lacordaire. According to the custom of bigoted people, enamoured of their own impressions, the enthusiast imagined nothing better than to make the family share in the lesson with which he had been so edified. Hardly had he unfolded his napkin, when he commenced an attack upon the philosophical doctrines of the school of the eighteenth century,

and as the sermon was under three heads, and the dinner had but three courses, the dessert came in before Maxime had finished the annihilation of Voltaire and Rousseau—those two eternal targets of ecclesiastical riflemen!

Monsieur de Beaupré listened to his son-in-law's homily with the praiseworthy resignation of a man who is enjoying a good dinner. Flavie was, to all appearance, strictly attentive; but for the first time, Madame de Gardagne bent upon her son an eye less kindly than scrutinizing. Impressed by the worldly ideas which had invaded the habitual austerity of her mind in the course of the last two days, the film fell from eyes long sealed by the duties of religion and maternity. In spite of her affection, she could not but remark that Maxime, with his long black coat and long fair hair, had a scholastic appearance, fitter for an ecclesiastic than for a man of the world; and all the more flagrant as the supreme elegance of Monsieur de Choisy challenged a

ridiculous comparison. In spite of her own profound piety, she could not help perceiving that her son, though an admirable theologian, was deficient in the tone and manners of polished society.

"Will he never have done with Voltaire?" murmured she, unable to resist her ill humour. "Nobody here presumes to contradict him. He should be more attentive to Flavie, whom he is worrying to death. My son is quite insupportable. His voice, naturally so agreeable, becomes harsh when excited, and his gesticulations are devoid of all ease or grace. People are right to say that mothers are blind. Till now, I never was aware of Maxime's failings. He possesses both head and heart, with great rectitude of character. His religious principles, thank Heaven, are unassailable; and he is every thing that is noble or honourable. But after all, appearance—appearance is something! nay, of paramount consequence in the eyes of frivolous

people, and of what are we women made but frivolity ? If, to enhance his excellent qualities, Maxime possessed only a quarter of Monsieur de Choisy's worldly advantages, which he turns to such ill account, he would be a finished gentleman, and Flavie would adore him !"

Maxime was now once more giving vent, in the dryest prose, to his peculiar opinions; when Madame de Gardagne abruptly rose, and terminated the tedious homily of her son. She passed the evening and part of the night in meditating in her own apartment on the fallacies of a system to which she had been wedded for the last twenty years, and which, to all appearance, had acquired a permanent footing in the family. A mind naturally benevolent, at length, penetrated the mists of intolerance; and the Marchioness perceived that if virtue be at all times indispensable, it is in some instances insufficient; and that the education of Maxime, exclusively

devoted to the practice of virtue, was unfitted to the corruptions of civilized life. Piety and simplicity of mind, so excellent in solitude, become, in the world, a source of endless peril. The just man is sure to fall a sacrifice if he present his bare throat to the knife of the assassin. In their struggle with the evil spirits, the angels, if we are to believe Raphael and Milton, assumed in imitation of their adversaries, the spear and the sword; and Piety, from the moment she descends to the terrestrial arena, must secure herself in the panoply of worldly wisdom, or sink in the strife.

The Marchioness did not flinch from the results of her new views and projects.

"I have been to blame," said she, "in listening to my personal feelings. I have conducted myself like one who sends her son into a forest full of thieves, forbidding him the use of arms, for fear of wounding himself. Paris is fatal to matrimonial happiness, and my poor

Maxime as I have brought him up, defenceless against the specious traitors who surround us. His purity of mind, if it secure salvation in the world to come, secures perdition in this; and I would fain have him reach the heavenly goal by a less thorny road than I have followed. My boy must live, as well as die, happy; and happiness is impossible for him without the love of Flavie. It is not too late to acquire it. He must become like other men of his age and condition—amiable, elegant, attractive. Conscious of the mischief engendered by my own austerity, I will pray night and day—I will do even penance for him, and Heaven will pardon the failings of a mother who has loved much!"

Next day, Madame de Gardagne sent for Maxime.

"Yesterday," said she, "your wife decided that instead of going to Madame de Selve's, we would immediately return home. Flavie is fatigued with her balls, and I find that a

Paris life does not suit me ; so we shall go without delay—perhaps to-morrow."

"I would rather it were to-day," said Maxime, greatly pleased ; "I long to be at Luscourt, and return to a life of tranquillity and simplicity. The vortex of Parisian life is contrary to my tastes and habits, and every day I grow more impatient to quit them."

"You must, nevertheless, submit to it a few days longer," said his mother-in-law.

"How, do I not accompany you ?"

"You forget your law-suit !"

"It will not go before the court of appeal these two months."

"True ! but you must visit the judges, consult your counsel, in fact, attend to all the circumstances arising out of the progress of the suit. Business before every thing, Maxime. Remember, you are now a man, and responsible for the management of your fortune. Whether it please you or no, you must remain here till the decision of the court of appeal."

"As you please," replied the obedient son. "But it is a cruel sacrifice! What am I to do when you are both gone?"

"Have you not a thousand ways of employing your time?"

"Certainly. In the first place, study; and I promise you that the Royal Library will oftener receive my visits than the drawing-rooms of our fashionable friends."

"Study!" exclaimed Madame de Gardagne, pettishly. "Listen, dear Maxime. It is possible to study too much. You may, perhaps, think me frivolous for my time of life, and influenced by the brilliant society in which we have been living this winter. Nevertheless, permit me to suggest a plan of life somewhat at variance with yours, to which you would do well to apply yourself during our separation."

"I am all attention, dear mother," replied Luscourt, smiling. "Are you not my guide, my oracle? To what am I to apply myself? Hebrew or Sanscrit?"

"On the contrary, to every thing that is most French in the world. Certain branches of your education have been hitherto neglected, and to which you would do well to give your attention. Riding, for instance—music, dancing, fencing—"

"Fencing!—dancing!" exclaimed Maxime, in utter amazement.

"I need scarcely tell you that it is not with a view to fighting or going to balls. But all these exercises, innocent enough in themselves, are conducive to health. They fortify the body, and promote an ease and grace of person far from despicable."

"I fear you think me very awkward!" observed Maxime, inwardly mortified.

"Between an awkward deportment and finished manners, there are many degrees, my child," she replied. "Pardon my maternal pride, if I desire to see your personal advantages in their best light."

"That others judge me awkward, dear mother, is a matter of perfect indifference," replied

the young Count; "but your slightest wishes must ever be my law. In order, then, to please you, I shall take the lessons you suggest."

"As regards your dress," said the mother, delighted to have gained the first point, "I cannot imagine who you employ for a tailor! One would think you were dressed in the cast off clothes of Monsieur de Beaupré!"

"Dearest mother, I never knew you so anxious about my exterior before. Since when have you taken to heart the cut of my coat?" cried Maxime, with a glance at his costume, in which comfort more than elegance seemed to have been studied.

"Of whom ought I to be vain, if not of my son?" cried the Marchioness.

"I do not aspire to become a coxcomb," said the young husband, indignantly.

"There is a wide difference between being a coxcomb, and the acquirement of certain

qualities, superficial, if you will, but essential to your position of life. Your principles are too firm to be influenced by the frivolous examples of society. After all, one may be virtuous, yet elegant; a model of propriety, and yet fashionably dressed. In former times, when a young man appeared in the world, he selected some one of acknowledged taste and elegance for his model, and thus acquired the brilliant and graceful exterior exacted by society. Why should you not follow the example? Among the men of your acquaintance there are three or four competent to give you valuable advice on the subject; Monsieur de Choisy, for instance. I do not allude to his manners or his reputation, which I appreciate much less than his taste."

"Believe me, Choisy is calumniated," said the Count, gravely. "I have ever found in him the strictest probity and delicacy. He knows my principles, and though we differ on many points, he strictly respects them. On

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CHAPTER VIII.

NEXT morning, Madame de Gardagne and her daughter-in-law, accompanied by Monsieur de Beaupré quitted Paris; for the Marchioness was prompt in decision, and in this instance deemed it prudent to take speedy advantage of the laudable determination of her daughter-in-law. Maxime lost no time in presenting himself at Monsieur de Choisy's.

"You see me a widower, and an orphan," said he, more at his ease than usual, for the advice of his mother had already extended the horizon of his notions. On learning the departure of the ladies, the Viscount could scarcely conceal his surprise.

"Tartuffe in petticoats!" thought he; "is it thus you execute your treaties; your homily of yesterday then was a mere decoy? Luckily I am too old a fox to be caught! Stratagem against stratagem! Flavie dare not resist the will of her duenna; but at least she carries away a talisman that forbids her to forget me. Under any other circumstances, to write would have been a fault worthy a school boy; but our separation considered, my two letters may become exceedingly useful. In absence, words are forgotten, but letters are read. She has concealed mine, I am convinced, next her heart —the usual repository of clandestine correspondence."

"Here are some documents relative to the woods of La Chesnaie which my mother desired me to deliver to you," interrupted the young Count, taking from his pocket a packet carefully sealed with the huge family arms of the house of Luscourt.

The Viscount tore open the envelope; and

in the midst of the papers, perceived a small packet on which was inscribed, "Two letters read by Madame de Gardagne alone, and sent back to the Viscount de Choisy, who will comprehend the absurdity of a correspondance which only serves to divert the dull hours of a dowager."

The middle aged swain read the superscription twice, before he could venture to trust his eyes.

"Allow me to place these papers in my bureau," said he to Maxime, trying to look unconcerned and proceeding to his own room; where, in a state of phrensy, he tore asunder the seal of the vexatious envelope, in which he found the two letters he had addressed to Madame de Luscourt. In the midst of his confusion, his eyes turned involuntarily towards a glass, where his face expressed such lamentable consternation, that, after a moment's contemplation, he relaxed into an immoderate fit of laughter.

"Delicious, upon my soul!" said he. "I write letters for the benefit of the mother-in-law, and the husband returns them to me, without his having the most remote idea of the nature of his errand. That old woman is a lynx; but how did my letters fall into her hands? If my provincial beauty made them over to her, I did not think her capable of such simplicity—for it is either that or profound duplicity. To expose a confidential communication, is as sacrilegious as to betray the secret of the confessional; and I, who made so favourable an inference from seeing her place her foot upon the note! Well, well, Easter is at hand; and I have always remarked that Lent is fatal to my hopes. To have been repulsed, unmasked and distanced by an old woman! No matter! I am not used to lower my colours, and have gained battles as desperate as this."

Choisy having now recovered his usual assurance, returned to the drawing room.

After some minutes' conversation Maxime communicated to him his intention of remaining in Paris two months longer; which information readily suggested a project of retaliation.

"This old mother-in-law is my evil genius," thought he, after the departure of Luscourt. "She sees and divines all, as though she possessed the gift of the fairy Fine-ear, who the plants growing. As long as Flavie remains under her protection, my efforts will avail me nothing; but the little woman is ripe for revolt, and if I can make a tool of Luscourt, may still reconquer my influence. I must modify his principles, and his conduct will modify itself. Two or three months' absence from the mother's eye, will suffice to give him a taste for the delights of liberty. We shall manage to get rid of the dowager; and Flavie who enjoys Paris, will want to return here, when the mother-in-law will have retired to her château, like other deposed sovereigns. From that moment, my star, now in

eclipse, will shine forth again. My first object must be to influence the conduct and character of Luscourt."

Having thus digested his plans, the Viscount proceeded next day to visit Maxime.

"My dear fellow," said he, "I have a plan to propose to you. Now that the ladies are gone, why continue this expensive apartment, where you must needs be dull, for nothing is more dispiriting than a place abandoned by those we love. Come and pitch your tent with me. Far from inconveniencing me, I shall be delighted with your coming; by that means, you will avoid solitude, which must be insupportable to a man usually domesticated with his family. You will meet at my house, Marcenay, Villaret, and a few other good fellows; a rather worldly company, you will say, but your conscience has nothing to fear, for you will be perfectly at home in my house, and your habits shall be scrupulously respected. What say you?"

"One would think him acting at my mother's instigation," thought Maxime. "I should not be astonished if the thing had been preconcerted."

He consented to the treacherous proposition of his friend, in whose house he established himself that very evening. It is usual for the wolf to seek the fold; but on this occasion the lamb accepted the hospitality of the wolf. By a singular coincidence, the Dowager and the Viscount, two implacable enemies, had chosen the same road, though the object of one was directly opposed to that of the other; and Maxime gladly obeyed this double impulsion. His wounded self-love suggested that, since even his mother accused him of deficiency of manner and address, he must be indeed in fault; and deeply was he mortified at the idea that his wife was not less alive to his defects.

"I admit that I dress ill," said he, after comparing himself with the elegant friends of the Viscount; and next day, at breakfast,

he begged Choisy to give him the address of his tailor.

" I will take you myself to Blin," replied the man of fashion unable to refrain from a smile. " The first step has succeeded," thought he.

" Since you are so good, would you be also kind enough to recommend me to a good riding school ?" resumed Maxime.

" With all my heart," cried Choisy.

" Is Grisier still the best fencing master in Paris ?" inquired Maxime ; while the Viscount found it difficult to conceal his amazement.

The emancipation from which he anticipated such auspicious results, was already half effected. Maxime soon discovered a charm in the improvement produced by his change of dress. He gradually learned to estimate those personal advantages which his rigidity of principle had till now, treated with contempt. He still went regularly to mass, and observed

the fasts of the church; but his predilection for pious meditations and theological discussions gradually subsided. One evening, Maxime found himself at the Opera, almost without knowing to what evil inspiration to attribute such a secession from his principles.

"What strikes you most at the Opera?" inquired the Viscount.

"Precisely what surprised the famous doge of Venice—to find myself there at all," replied he.

But it is needless to trace, step by step, the progress of the proselyte. After passing three months, with the Viscount, with whom he lived upon the most familiar and confidential terms the Court of Appeal pronounced a favourable decision on his suit; but so little did he think of taking his departure, that he invented new pretexts to prolong his stay in Paris. One day Madame de Gardagne received a letter from her son, which produced a smile on her countenance.

"Perfumed paper, I protest!" exclaimed she; "the prodigal son could not have made more progress in the same space of time." And that very evening, she despatched an answer, enjoining Maxime to return to the château, where family affairs required his presence.

CHAPTER IX.

EARLY in the month of July, a travelling-carriage entered the court-yard of the Chateau de Luscourt. On perceiving Monsieur de Choisy step out of the carriage, the two ladies were mute with astonishment; nor did they recover their surprise on beholding a second individual appear, in the person of Maxime, so utterly metamorphosed, as to be scarcely recognizable.

A well-cut coat displayed his elegant figure to the utmost advantage; the tie of his black cravat was unimpeachable, his hair becomingly arranged, while his well-trimmed moustachios relieved the expression of his physiognomy.

His eyes, formerly so dull, now flashed like those of the eagle prepared to brave the ardour of the sun. After respectfully embracing his mother, he pressed his wife so tenderly to his bosom, that Madame de Luscourt stood blushing and confused at his change of deportment. Madame de Gardagne seemed to forget the presence of the Viscount. She beheld nothing but her son, whom she contemplated from head to foot, in a state of ecstasy bordering upon terror. At length, the vanity of the mother prevailed over her scruples.

"Scapegrace!" said she, playfully, "what excuse do you make for your long absence?"

"Dear mother," replied he, "did you not exile me? I waited only your summons."

"Somewhat patiently, I suspect," said she, accepting his arm to return to the château.

"Are you going to scold me for having obeyed you so well?" replied Maxime.

"But if you have exceeded my instructions—"

"In that case, you must be indulgent. Excess of obedience can scarcely be considered a crime."

During the rest of the day, he evinced a freedom of mind and ease of manner, exciting the wonder of his family, to whom he gave the news of Paris, talking politics, literature, and fashion, with the assurance of an old stager. His mother, as she listened, became somewhat thoughtful, probably from recollecting the expiatory offices imposed upon her by the sudden expansion of her son's worldly ideas. But Flavie watched every movement, and listened to every word from her husband's lips, with gratified attention; and Monsieur de Beaupré laughed outright at his son-in-law's newly acquired elegance of deportment. The Viscount, meanwhile, sat surveying the family groups as so many puppets destined to be pulled by his wires. After dinner, a shower of rain having confined them to the house, Beaupré, to whom quiet was insupportable, proposed a game of billiards to the Viscount.

"Let us play a pool," said he, "and then Maxime can join us."

And to the surprise of all present, the young Count not only accepted the proposal, but beat them in every game.

"My dear Maxime!" exclaimed Beaupré, "I see you have not lost your time in Paris! If you only handle a foil as well as you do a cue, my congratulations will be unlimited."

"Let us try," said Luscourt, coolly; and they proceeded to the hall, and took up the foils, masks, and gloves. This time, the young Count was defeated by the old gentleman, who, in spite of his obesity, would have made a formidable opponent to St. George. On taking off his mask at the end of the assault, he frankly accosted his adversary.

"Well done!" cried he. "In three months' lessons, you have done wonders. Your thrusts and parries want vigour; but we will soon improve them. I congratulate you with all my

heart; and trust that, with your other exercises, you have not omitted riding. You used to look like a pair of tongs when mounted."

"To-morrow I trust you will find me improved," said Maxime, with modesty.

"Your husband is grown perfectly charming," cried Monsieur de Beaupré to Flavie, who was contemplating with delight the improvement in Maxime's appearance.

From the moment of his arrival, Monsieur de Choisy conducted himself towards the Countess and the Marchioness with the supreme self-sufficiency of a man of the world. But in the course of the evening, he judged it better to renounce his diplomatic reserve; and in seeking the eyes of Flavie, resumed the expressive looks in which he had presumed to indulge three months before. The young wife, however, pertinaciously evaded his gaze; and from these manœuvres, there resulted a mute and significant scene, which Maxime could not

but perceive, though he affected ignorance of what was passing. On a renewal of the same attempts the following day, the Count requested an interview of his wily friend.

"My dear Choisy," said he, "for these three months past, I have so far profited by the lessons you have kindly given me, that I know not how to thank you. My gratitude overpowers me."

"You are laughing at me, Luscourt!" rejoined the Viscount. "For what on earth are you indebted to me?"

"For much, of which at present you are not aware," replied Maxime. "Among other things, for more quick-sightedness than of old."

"I was not aware of my talents as an oculist," said the Viscount, laughing.

"They are not the less remarkable," rejoined his friend; "for, thanks to your useful instructions, I saw you last night looking at my wife in the tenderest manner."

"Viper that I have fostered in my bosom!" thought Choisy, confounded by the result of his instructions. "You are indeed an apt scholar."

"Under these circumstances, my dear Viscount," continued Luscourt, with perfect coolness, "I confess myself to be under the greatest obligation to you; but I warn you, that the acquittal of my debt, which you seem inclined to propose, does not suit me. My wife made me certain communications yesterday, unnecessary to repeat. I would fain avoid quarrels; to secure which, I will thank you to point the artillery of your seductions in some other direction."

Detected and put to shame, like the fox in the fable, the Viscount attempted an awkward explanation. Monsieur de Luscourt appeared satisfied, and the conversation dropped. On leaving the son, however, he fell in with the mother, who had just had a conversation with her daughter-in-law,

which seemed to render her twenty years younger.

"Monsieur de Choisy," said the Marchioness, "I have a few commissions for Paris. Will you be good enough to take charge of them?"

And the discomfited roué could scarcely suppress his indignation at this bold hint that his company was unacceptable.

"Are your commissions urgent?" said he, affecting to misunderstand her meaning.

"I own I am in a hurry. By exercising your utmost diligence, you will increase the vast debt of gratitude I already owe you."

"Gratitude, Madam?" exclaimed poor Choisy.

"Gratitude the most profound," replied Madame de Gardagne, with a sarcastic smile. "You intended, I am told, to perfect the education of Madame de Luscourt. The project was slight; the accomplishment might have been important to the happiness of my

family. How can I sufficiently thank you, therefore, for having transferred your educational plans to my son? Admit that he has profited by them! Monsieur de Beaupré, Madame de Luscourt, all of us, are of opinion that you have reason to be proud of your pupil."

The Viscount was too accustomed to conquest, not to accept with a good grace this single defeat.

"Your commissions shall be executed the day after to-morrow, Madam," replied he, coldly, "as I start for Paris this evening. As to your thanks, I accept them freely, for they are better deserved than you imagine."

"Explain yourself," said the Dowager, deliberately opening her snuff-box. "Pray explain yourself."

The Viscount hesitated.

"The happiness of pleasing Madame de Luscourt, Madam," said he, "is a pretension

which I have long renounced. But I could not so easily abjure the desire to secure her from pretenders more dangerous than myself. The experience your son has acquired in my society, will suggest to him the necessity of setting at defiance, by dint of his own affection and influence, the ambition of others more persevering than your humble servant."

"Se non è vero, è ben trovato!" cried the old Marchioness, with a cunning smile. "You have a charming talent, my dear Viscount, for getting out of a scrape, and pouring balm into wounds. I confess myself so far converted to your faith, that I believe knowledge of the world and superficial accomplishments essential to the husband of so pretty a woman as Madame de Luscourt. He could scarcely have found a more accomplished preceptor than yourself. Admit, in your turn," she continued, pointing through the window to the

shrubberies, through which the young couple were strolling, arm in arm, in the enjoyment of the utmost conjugal confidence—"admit, my dear Monsieur de Choisy, that you have also had—AN APT SCHOLAR."

THE STIGMA.

THE STIGMA.

CHAPTER I.

One cold and cloudy night of March, sudden gusts of wind were raising thick clouds of dust along the high road, and the usual stillness of rural life prevailed at the close of day. The herds having returned to their folds, not a voice was heard; not even that of the vigilant dogs entrusted with the security of the farms. The white walls of the cottages appeared here and there, their uncertain line forming a broad and unequal street.

The most prominent of these dwellings was at the entrance of the village, a house newly

stuccoed and the roof being embellished with a creaking weather-cock. Over the door, was suspended a sign, the humble effort of some self-taught rural genius, representing a half naked woman, wearing a pointed cap and bells, and holding in her scarlet hands, a gaudy bauble. The simple-minded peasants persisted in tracing in this grotesque performance, a symbol of Republicanism; but better enlightened individuals at once appreciated the prancing goddess, over whose head the artist had inscribed in broad yellow letters, "The Charming Folly. Good entertainment for man and horse." The sign was not very attractive; for nine times in ten, the hostess and her servant were found standing at the door, with their arms folded, surveying the waggoners, whose ponderous loads were ever rolling along the road from Strasbourg to Paris.

On the dark and tempestuous night in question, the hostess of the Folly maintained her usual station longer than usual, in the hope

that some benighted traveller would seek the hospitality of her house. A brisk fire of faggots was flaming on the hearth, and threw its light across the road; the table was laid, chairs ranged around the table, while the bright flaggons stood in array upon a cloth of spotless whiteness.

"Not a soul!" murmured the hostess, eyeing with a feeling of ill humour, the symbol that carelessly swung over her head. "This wretched house does not so much as bring me in a farthing! There is an end of all business! The fast coaches have proved our ruin. It is really worth while to dress oneself daily, from, head to foot, and pay ten crowns for the most beautiful sign on the Strasbourg road, yet never see a soul within the doors! I shall soon stick up, 'Entertainment gratis for man and horse.' Perhaps it might bring me customers. In the mean time, not a soul comes, and we have laid the cloth for nothing this evening!"

"The same as every other evening!" said the little waiting maid with a heavy sigh.

"Hold your tongue, saucy child," said the hostess, sourly; "what are you doing there with your arms crossed? Is it to look at the moon that I pay your board and wages? Go in and shut the door."

"Nay, nay, dear Madame Babillon, not yet. I see something yonder," faltered the girl, pointing out a light in the distance.

"It is the Nancy diligence."

"No, no; the diligences have only one lamp, and this has two."

"Then it must be a travelling carriage. No use to me. Such fine people don't frequent my house. There is another nice invention, posting! —the ruin of horses and inns, to say nothing of the still newer invention, where they travel without horses or post boys," said the hostess, with a sneer; "but it is not in our beautiful Lorraine, I trust, we shall ever see such nonsense!"

"Madam, Madam," interrupted the girl, "the carriage yonder is coming down upon us like the wind."

The two luminous points were indeed rapidly advancing and the smacking of the post boy's whip was distinctly heard, urging the horses to a gallop.

"It is not travellers in such a hurry, that do any good to inns, and be hanged to them!" cried the hostess. But as she pronounced the words, the sound of a heavy mass falling to the ground was heard, the lights suddenly disappeared, and cries were audible in the distance.

"The carriage is upset, a customer at last!" exclaimed the hostess, in a transport of joy. "Martine, fetch the lantern, throw some wood on the fire—tie up the dog—light the lamp—come—quick—stir yourself. The carriage is fallen into the ditch and must be broken to pieces. If they should only prove English people; or if by chance there were some broken limbs, what a God-send for us all! Quick, Martine, let us go help these poor unfortunate people!"

The carriage was indeed upset, close to the public house of the Folly, in a deep ditch lined with brambles; and the rapacious heart of the hostess thrilled with delight, when, by the light of her lantern, she discovered the importance of the disaster. The carriage was completely destroyed. The horses struggling in their harness, lashed out tremendous kicks; while the postillion stood uttering the most tremendous oaths. Stifled groans proceeded from the interior of the carriage, from which the travellers had attempted in vain to extricate themselves.

The valet and maid who travelled in the rumble, were luckily ejected into a field of clover, and escaped with trifling contusions; but the hostess, aided by the postillion, was trying to open the door of the carriage, when a young man rushed forward, exclaiming:

"Dearest mother, are you hurt?"

"Grievously!" replied a most Britannic accent, with a degree of phlegm somewhat singular in such a situation.

"Oh, Albert! what a horrible fall!" exclaimed another voice; "take us out of this, I entreat you."

"Do not be frightened, my dear little lady," said the hostess, thrusting her robust arm into the interior of the carriage, "you are safe, I have hold of you; take my arm, and jump out."

A slight and pretty figure now sprang through the door, and fell lightly to the ground.

"Thank heaven, you are not hurt, Diana!" exclaimed the young man; "but my mother—my poor mother!"

They now extricated an old lady from the carriage, and laid her on the road-side, wrapt in her cloak.

"Take me to the nearest inn," said she, to her son as calmly as if coming out of a bath, "I feel ill, extremely ill."

"My dear aunt, how dreadful!" exclaimed the young lady, averting her eyes with horror; then, supporting herself on the arm of the

lady's maid, she faltered in a faint voice, "Nancy, take me away; were she to expire before us, it would be too shocking! I have never seen any one die. I am frightened to death, Nancy;—pray do not leave me!"

"My dear son," resumed the old lady, with the same presence of mind, "I think my right leg is fractured and my arm dislocated, which will prevent our continuing our journey. Where are we?"

"At P——, Madam, between Ligny and Bar-le-Duc, department of the Meuse," interposed the hostess, holding up her lantern, as if to shew the country. "My house is close by, where you will find every thing you desire."

"Call all your people here, my good woman," said the young man, "and send for a medical man."

"Martine, Martine," cried the hostess, "come this way. My house is yonder, Sir—the large white house by the road-side; we can carry the lady thither with ease, and in two

hours, shall have the doctor from Bar-le-Duc, even if I go and fetch him myself."

"From Bar-le-Duc? We are then in a village far from all assistance. Alas! my poor suffering mother!" said the young man in despair.

"If she would only die here," thought the hostess, beginning to calculate what such a catastrophe might produce; "what a stroke of luck!"

A quarter of an hour afterwards, the travellers were installed at the sign of the Folly. The suffering lady was placed in a spacious room, whose mysterious depths were scarcely discernible by the aid of two lights placed at the corners of the chimney piece. The wind whistled through the cracked and shutterless windows, raising the dust from the hearth, on which hissed a faggot of green wood. Scanty serge curtains surrounded the bed, the worm-eaten feet of which, protruded from under a deeply flounced counterpane. A rickety table

and three or four broken-backed chairs completed the furniture of the apartment, which the hostess persisted in styling the state chamber, and in which no traveller had slept for several years.

The young man, seated at the head of the bed, was absorbed in reverie. His eyes were fixed upon his suffering mother; and, with a face of ghastly paleness, he waited the arrival of the doctor. The young lady was standing before the fire, leaning against the mantle-piece, her pretty little foot resting upon the iron fender. Her features were striking and regular, her fair locks fell profusely around her face and delicate white throat. She had an exquisite complexion, a slender and elegant form and stature, and the blue limpid eye, peculiar to the Northern tribes. She evidently belonged to that island so famed for the fresh and radiant beauty of its women; but there was wanting that infantine grace, that expression of modest timidity, which usually impart

a charm to English faces. Her face announced ill humour, rather than grief or anxiety; and she cast a look of contempt upon the mean and naked room, though the best that could be placed at the disposal of travellers, by the hostess of the Folly. The lady's maid, raising her eyes to heaven, was likewise horror-struck by prospects of such unusual privation.

When the doctor arrived, Diana retired into a room close to that of her aunt, where she waited the opinion about to be given. On finding the consultation prolonged, she took up a book, and soon evinced its influence by wrapping herself in her pelisse, and indulging in a gentle yawn; then, sinking back in her chair, she closed her eyes, and her charming head resting on one of her hands, fell fast asleep.

At the close of an hour, a slight knock at the door suddenly awoke her. She was surprised and confused on seeing her cousin stand before her.

"Well?" said she, without rising.

"Thank heaven, the doctor, in whom I place much confidence, assures me that my mother is in no danger!" said the young man, with much emotion. "But what a horrible accident! The bone is crushed, and the operation was most painful. My poor mother! How cruelly she suffered, yet without uttering a word! You heard nothing, Diana?—How long the time must have appeared to you!"

As he pronounced these words, his eyes fell upon the book open on the table, and a smile of bitterness played upon his lips. He turned away his head, but the movement was unperceived by Diana.

"Does the doctor think my aunt can be removed to Bar-le-Duc?" she inquired.

"Certainly not!" replied he, coldly. "We shall be here a month or six weeks. Good night, Diana. It is late. Take some rest; *I* will watch over my mother."

And he retired, without offering his hand, as was his custom, to his lovely cousin.

"A month or six weeks here!" murmured the young lady. "But it will be enough to kill one! What will become of me in this horrible place?"

"Did you call, Madam?" said the hostess, entering at that moment. "Your room is quite ready."

"My room? You presume to call that dirty garret you showed me, with two straw chairs and a bed without curtains, a room? Am I to sleep there, pray?"

"The apartment is clean," said the astonished hostess, "and commands a pretty view of the high-road and the meadows beyond. To be sure you would have been better off in the great room; but—"

"The one is as bad as the other!" said the young lady, abruptly. "Be so good as to let me have something to eat. I suppose we are to sup? Where is the dining-room?"

"The dining-room?—You passed through it, Madam, down stairs—as you enter."

"The kitchen!—Are we among savages?" cried Miss Diana, with a degree of consternation somewhat ludicrous. "I will sup in my own room, then. You may retire."

"This young damsel does not seem very accommodating," said the hostess, grumbling as she went down stairs.

"How should she?" cried the lady's maid, who was following. "A rich and noble heiress, like Miss Diana Neville, has a right to give herself airs."

"The old lady seems rather more agreeable," observed the hostess.

"Do you allude to the Countess de Guercy?" demanded the waiting woman scornfully.

"A Countess in my house!" exclaimed the hostess, in ecstacy, "a thing that never happened before, even in the time of my grandfather!"

An hour later, the doors and windows were closed; all was still in the village inn. Some

there were, however, who did not sleep. Miss Diana, stretched, for the first time in her life, on a bed without curtains, reviled the destiny which had reduced her to an obscure inn in the heart of Lorraine, with far more sympathy than she bestowed upon the sufferings of her aunt.

The young man, meanwhile, seated at the head of his mother's bed, reflected, with a heavy heart, on his present grievances; more especially as the future presented prospects as unpromising as they were uncertain. He thought of Diana, his beautiful cousin, with whom he had only a week's acquaintance, and to whom he was shortly to be united; and as the circumstances of their recent intercourse recurred to him, his mind sorely misgave him.

The only inmate of the house whose midnight meditations were perfectly satisfactory, was the astonished hostess of the Folly.

CHAPTER II.

Next day, Albert de Guercy and Miss Diana Neville breakfasted in the chamber of the Countess. The old lady had passed a good night, supporting her sufferings with courage, resignation, and patience, sanguine of a prompt recovery. Her son, somewhat reassured, had resumed his calm and happy countenance, and the good humour of a young man accustomed to the ease and elegancies of a life spent in refined amusements and agreeable occupations. He had all the appearance of a person enjoying a good position in the world, and uninterrupted happiness. His expression of countenance was not remarkable;

but his jet black hair, elegant figure, and delicate features, imparted an air of peculiar distinction. Born of a French father, and educated in a French college, he had occasionally a slight accent of English, that one would have imagined he purposely imitated from his mother.

The Countess, on the other hand, was of the true English character—phlegmatic, resolute, original, full of noble qualities and eccentricities; yet a worthy woman, devoting herself to the happiness and prospects of her son, with more affection than discernment. She was passionately fond of travelling, and for ever furnishing residences in which she did all but reside. At the time of her recent accident, she was returning from Germany, with the only daughter of her brother, Miss Diana Neville, whose mother had recently died at Weimar, and who was to pass the spring with her in Paris. A marriage was projected between the heiress and the young Count, of which the young lady was still ignorant.

Miss Diana was neither speculative nor far-sighted. Young and handsome as she was, her selfishness might still pass for the result of a wayward temper and the caprice of a spoilt child. But Albert was beginning to suspect that his pretty cousin possessed a cold and arid heart, and an obstinate disposition. As they now sat opposite to each other, with the weary faces of two persons having little sympathy, the conversation soon flagged. Luckily the hostess, followed by Martine, entered the room, and gave a well-timed fillip to the conversation.

"As we are here for some time, my good woman," said Diana, "you really must make your house more habitable."

"What is wanting, then, in my house?" muttered the irritated hostess. "Every thing is nice and clean, bright and shining. You have only to ask for what you want."

"In the first place," said Diana, "I must have a lamp instead of those horrible candles."

"Nothing easier!" replied the hostess. "You have got one in your room."

"That horrible brass thing, which burns all night in the chimney?" cried Diana. "I tell you I want a lamp,—a lamp that burns with a white flame."

"A lamp with a white flame! what can she mean?" ejaculated the humiliated hostess.

"She means, Madam," said Martine, "a lamp like those of Madame Vialart; things as tall as a church steeple, and as full of mechanism as a barrel organ. They give out light like sun-shine."

"Perhaps Madame Vialart would be kind enough to lend me one of her lamps for a few days," mused the hostess.

"I must also have an arm-chair," said Diana.

"Mademoiselle has one already in her room."

"That old straw-bottomed ricketty concern?

No, no! I want a well-stuffed chair, in which I can repose."

"Like those at Madame Vialart's," added Martine; "arm-chairs into which one sinks like eider-down."

"Madame Vialart is so obliging, that perhaps she would lend me one. I would take care to put on a cover," said the hostess, apart.

"We must also have a clock, carpets, and foot-stools," continued Diana; "in fact, every thing indispensable to a house, and which is wanting here."

"Mercy on me!" thought the hostess, "where is all this to be found?"

The fair damsel now resumed her inventory with a haughty air; and at every object successively enumerated, Martine did not fail to say, with a certain air of pride,

"I know where to find it. Madame Vialart has plenty of such things, besides books and pictures."

"And who is Madame Vialart?" suddenly inquired Albert.

"To own the truth, Sir, I cannot say!"

"Madame Vialart is a good charitable lady," interposed Martine, "who lives at the end of the village, sir, in a pretty new house. Ask the poor people, Sir; *they* will tell you."

"Does she reside alone?" inquired Albert.

"No, Sir, she has a young lady with her."

"Is she young, then, and pretty?" demanded Miss Neville.

"Young, but for her beauty, I cannot say much," said the hostess, with the disparaging propensity peculiar to old women when ugly and crabbed. "The poor lady is not in good health, I fear. She is as white as wax. Perhaps she is in trouble; but nobody knows anything about her. It is now four years since she came here, and she has not yet received a single visit. She seems to have no relations, and at first, we had our suspicions. But as she never gets into debt, gives work to

the poor, and never beats down the shopkeepers, we now respect her. Whenever I have a service to ask, it is to her I address myself."

"She ought to be grateful for the preference," said Diana, ironically.

That evening, the poor hostess returned from Madame Vialart's, with an air of triumph.

"There!" said she, placing a beautiful lamp upon a bronze tripod; "and this is not all. We are to have carpets, arm-chairs, and stools!"

"How?" said the Count; "have you asked for all these things for us? It is being too troublesome!"

"By no means, Sir! When I mentioned that a lady lay ill at my house from an accident, she placed all at my disposal. She has such a generous heart, a heart of gold! I thanked her from the bottom of my soul."

Shortly afterwards, the furniture was

brought, which proved to be of the simplest elegance. Albert remembered having seen such in Paris ; and his surprise was the greatest on finding it accompanied by some English books of travels and poetry, and a portfolio of engravings. All these things revealed habits of luxury and elegance, characteristic of a woman whose life must have passed in circles rarely found out of the latitude of Paris.

A strong feeling of interest and curiosity soon preoccupied the mind of Count Albert. He was ardently desirous of making the acquaintance of one whose tastes and habits seemed in such direct contradiction to the seclusion in which she lived. Involuntarily, he found himself sympathising in her complete isolation ;—in that existence which rolled away, blank and monotonous as the horizon of the desert. He even founded a romance upon the life of Madame Vialart ; and made a thousand suppositions and inquiries, in which Martine could give little information.

Diana was somewhat pacified by the aspect of the furniture placed at her disposal. Having installed herself in a luxurious velvet arm-chair, close to a charming sofa-table, upon which were placed some amusing volumes, her ill humour gave way to a fit of ennui, which, upon so beautiful a face, took the aspect of melancholy. By degrees, her ennui assumed a tone of reflection. She discovered that her cousin was one of the most distinguished looking men she had ever seen. An instinct of coquetry, the desire to please, awoke within her, imparting to her beauty the only charm in which it was deficient. Albert was for a moment dazzled. Although he did not love his cousin, his mother's project of a marriage between them commanded his implicit deference.

During the first day or two, Count Albert did not quit the invalid, to whom Diana was equally assiduous in her attentions. But one morning, the weather appeared unusually mild, a beautiful April sun warmed the surface of the

earth, and the air seemed gladdened by the return of spring.

"To-day, dear Albert," said the Countess, addressing her son, "you must quit the atmosphere of this sick room."

"Where would you have me go, dearest mother?" inquired the young man, with a smile. "Diana, who walks every morning, assures me there is nothing to admire in this neighbourhood."

"It is too true!" said she. "Impossible to find a less interesting landscape. I have seen nothing fit for my sketch-book, but a pretty villa peeping out of a clump of trees."

Albert immediately recalled to mind the description of Martine.

"I will go out, as you desire it," said he "for I have a visit to make."

"A visit to make?" repeated the two ladies.

"A visit of ceremony. Ought I not go

thank the lady who so kindly lent us the furniture?"

"Certainly! I shall go myself with Diana, as soon as I am sufficiently well."

The young lady said nothing, but cast a look of vexation on her cousin, which he did not appear to understand, but, slightly bowing, left the room.

Count Albert now pursued his way along the street which, with intermingling gardens, formed the village of P——. The influence of a genial spring day gave rise to those feelings of calm happiness and vague expectation, so often conceived in hearts unacquainted with the stern realities of life. To him, the past was but a remembrance of all that is calm and blest in human life. Weariness of spirits, which, in the absence of real sorrow, often attacks an excitable mind, had never yet beset him. Travel had hitherto constituted his chief excitement; but while his imagination

had been enlivened, his heart maintained complete inaction.

The Count having halted at the end of the village, eagerly sought the spot described by Martine. The villa was easy to distinguish. It was such a house as Rousseau would have chosen; white, with green blinds, the lazy waters of the Ornain traversing the meadows which surrounded it. At some distance, it looked like a swan basking in the sun, with wings extended.

The Count proceeded along the avenue, his heart beating as if some urgent event were at hand, and not a simple act of politeness and courtesy. All was silent round the house.

The flight of a bird, or the murmur of a rippling fountain concealed among the trees, alone interrupted the stillness. It might have passed for the abode of the Sleeping Beauty, waiting for the prince who was to awaken her at the end of a hundred years.

The Count entered the hall, of which the

doors were open, when a maid presented herself, apparently startled at his appearance. Never had she yet announced a visit to her mistress; and without giving Albert time to mention his name, she opened the door, saying abruptly,

"Here is a gentleman."

Two ladies were seated beside the fire-place; one, on hearing the voice of the Count, laid down her book, and rose, slightly blushing. The other remained at her embroidery, like one whom the visit did not concern, but who was there on sufferance.

With graceful courtesy, Albert expressed his acknowledgements, which were accepted with perfect ease and good taste. Still, with this elegance of manner, there was combined a certain timidity as well as singular reserve. The interview was such as generally takes place between two people who meet for the first time; but Madame Vialart had such a happy facility of expression, as to confer a grace upon

the tritest subjects. Albert had not been ten minutes in her presence, before he decided that he had never seen a woman resembling the stranger. Though her round delicate features gave her an air somewhat infantine, it was united with the pensive look of mature age; the look announcing that all the joys of the soul are dead—all the hopes of life extinct, and that nothing remains but reminiscences of the past. She had not even the freshness of youth. Her face was unusually pale, and her jet black hair arranged in two even bands upon her marble forehead.

A rigid simplicity of costume contrasted with the refined luxury that surrounded her; and her plain black gown looked almost like mourning. Her companion was less young, but far handsomer than Madame Vialart; her physiognomy announcing an energetic and passionate nature, but devoid of delicacy and intelligence. It was regular and perfect beauty, deficient in the peculiar air of distinction

which constituted the charm of Madame Vialart. The conversation soon became more lively; and the fair stranger appeared to have found in Albert an echo of the world from which she was separated. Not an allusion escaped her, however, to that world; which seemed to be her natural sphere, and in which she was probably deeply regretted. She was suddenly startled by an inquiry from the Count, whether there were any family in the neighbourhood with whom they could establish relations of civility and intercourse.

"Not one!"—she replied, with a pensive smile, and a glance implying the absolute isolation in which she lived. Her companion, who had left her work, was listening with attention to the conversation in which she did not join; but at the last observation, which seemed to express a kind of regret, she observed, with an air of affection: "Nevertheless, our solitude has its charms. Our years roll quietly away—do they not, dearest Lucy?"

"A life so calm and quiet, elapses almost without one's being aware of it," replied Madame Vialart; and this was uttered in such a tone of resignation, that Albert was touched to the quick. An involuntary comparison presented itself to his mind. He reflected on the haughty assurance of Diana; till the fate of this poor woman, whose hopes and desires were limited to an existence all but negative, inspired him with earnest pity. He even ventured to tax the justice of heaven in conferring so brilliant a destiny on the one hand, and so scanty a portion of happiness on the other.

On taking leave, the Count begged permission to return; and upon his departure, Madame Vialart inquired of her young friend whether the visit had not been a painful interruption.

"Oh! that I could forget the existence of a world different from that in which we live!" exclaimed she; and when the young lady looked up, the eyes of her friend were overflowing with tears.

"Are you not happy, dear Lucy, that you weep?" she inquired, throwing her arms round her neck.

"It is merely a sudden depression, that will quickly pass," said Madame Vialart. "See! it is already over!—I am calm;—while you, poor soul, still weep to see me in trouble—"

"Which does me more harm than yourself," added the young lady, her large black eyes fixed upon Madame Vialart. "I would risk my life for you, if necessary."

"Dear Eleanor," said she, "so long as you are with me, I cannot be unhappy. And you will never leave me, will you? Let us content ourselves, then, with the present, and endeavour to forget the past."

Meanwhile, the Count returned home, in a disturbed state of mind. Never had he been so pre-occupied. Scarcely replying to the questions of Diana, he merely informed his mother that Madame Vialart was a woman of distinguished mind and manners.

The following day was Sunday. Early in

the morning, Albert placed himself close to the window which commanded the church of P——, standing in the midst of a churchyard, full of mallows growing over a few black wooden crosses.—Madame Vialart and her young friend soon made their appearance, proceeding to mass. The face of the fair stranger was concealed under a dark capote; but from the diminutive size of her foot, Albert recognised her at once, as well as from her light and airy figure. She passed on modestly, amid the salutations of the peasants, who, by their eagerness to approach her, announced the generosity and benevolence of her intercourse with her poorer neighbours. The observations of the young Count were unceremoniously interrupted by Martine.

"What are you doing here, Sir?" said she. "Looking out for Madame Vialart? There she goes! See how the people bow to her. It is just the same every Sunday. She is worshipped here; and it is said she is thinking of

purchasing an estate among us—all the land that lies between the forest and the river."

"A magnificent property!"—observed the Count, somewhat astonished.

"Worth I know not how many hundred thousand francs," continued Martine. "What happiness to be so rich!"

"I, too, am rich," thought Albert, "and fortune need be no obstacle between us. Perhaps, after all," thought he, rebuking the wildness of his fancies, "Monsieur Vialart may be still alive. What folly to waste two hours here, for the sake of a mere glimpse of her. In a few days, I shall be far away, and she will scarcely remember the stranger who passed through her village."

Then, hastily quitting the window, he resumed his place by the side of Diana.

A few days afterwards, Albert returned to Madame Vialart's, urged by feelings of interest for which he could not possibly account. He found her again, seated in the same room,

in company with her companion. Her occupations were unvarying. She either worked with her needle, or was engaged in reading. The Count, remarking a magnificent piano, placed between the doors opening upon the garden, inquired of Madame Vialart whether she were fond of music.

The question seemed to awake some painful reminiscence, and stir up bitter reflections; for looking mournfully towards the piano, she replied,—"I have renounced music—it gives me pain."

The Count observed that Madame Vialart received neither newspapers nor new publications. Some periodicals, of old date, were the most recent novelties in her collection. It seemed as if she did not wish to be reminded in her solitude, of the world she had abandoned.

The acquaintance, which in the beginning was only a source of amusement to Count Al-

bert, soon became indispensable to his happiness. Whether the life he led at P—— had favoured the impulses of his heart, or whether his hour were arrived, certain it was that he loved Madame Vialart, as a man loves only for the first time, with fervor, impetuosity, and anxiety. Giving way to emotions so new to him, he lived from day to day, happy in the unsuspected consciousness of his passion, without hope, without desire. At length, he reflected on the inevitable result of these delightful terms of intimacy, and on his approaching departure, became miserable. Albert was conscious of anticipating nearly with regret, the convalescence of his mother!

The health of the Countess was nearly re-established. One day, she observed with that peculiar phlegm, and the tone of authority that rendered her most trivial words impressive: "Do you not find this country very agreeable, Albert?—I would willingly pass the summer here, if you consented."

"Dear mother, I will do exactly as you please!" he replied; but though accustomed to the eccentricities of his mother, he had not anticipated such a proposal.

"I could have workmen from Bar le Duc, and make all this comfortable enough," said she. "I might superintend them myself, which would amuse me as soon as I am able to walk. The summer must be beautiful in Lorraine. Diana will amuse herself with sketches; you, with the sports of the field, and if we get tired we can only depart."

"But what will Diana say?"—urged the young Count.

"I have spoken to her on the subject, and she consents to pass some months here."

"Consents?"—

"Ay!" replied the Countess, with a smile; "she desires no better residence!—Albert, Albert! you have very little penetration!"

"What do you mean, dear mother?" cried he, as if some new idea had struck his mind.

"I mean," said the Countess, with an air of triumphant satisfaction, "that our lily of Albion, our proud and charming Diana, will stay wherever you choose, and prefer it to any other spot on earth.—She loves you, Albert!"

"Impossible, mother!" exclaimed the Count, "I have made no effort to merit such a distinction. God forbid that my cousin should love me; for know that my whole heart is given to another!"

END OF VOL. I.

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MODERN

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BY MRS. GORE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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CHAPTER III.

THE Countess de Guercy knew little of love, unless from books. Her life had passed uninfluenced by the passions; but like most women, whose conduct has been irreproachable, she entertained a few romantic ideas. Her son's confession at first astonished her, and gave her pain; but after that first impression, she observed with her usual serenity: "Be assured, Albert, that I do not wish your marriage to be a mere affair of calculation," said she. "It is because Diana is hand-

some and amiable, that I judged her a suitable match for you; perhaps I am mistaken in supposing she prefers you. I thought so, because I wished it, and spoke without reflection; but I trust I have been precipitate."

"I hope so too, dear mother."

"You have, nevertheless, concealed something from me, Albert," replied the kind mother, in a tone of affectionate reproach. "But you must now reveal all."

"Not yet, mother, I entreat you!" cried the Count. "Let me collect myself. All may end in a cruel delusion, and I shall indeed deserve to be pitied. You think me weak and trifling, mother, do you not?"

"On the contrary, both your head and heart may be depended on. I am sure you would not deceive me in any important circumstance of your life, and that your choice is worthy of you. But I conclude I must prepare myself for your determination to leave this place?"

"On the contrary, let us remain—let us

stay here some time longer. It is here my fate must be decided."

The Countess observed that evening to her niece, "I feel ashamed of keeping you here, Diana. You would pass your time far more agreeably in Paris or London?"

"Of course I should, dear aunt!" said she heedlessly.

"In that case, I will take you back to Paris, as was my first intention. You shall spend the summer with our dear Lady Neville; and in the autumn, come back to me here."

"What means this new arrangement, dear aunt?" said Diana, with some anxiety.

"By that time," said the Countess, kissing her forehead, "your cousin will perhaps be married, and we will pass the winter together in Italy."

Pale as death, Diana fixed her eyes upon her aunt in unspeakable astonishment; but wounded pride soon predominated over her

agitation, and her face assumed its usual air of disdainful reserve.

"Is my cousin about to be married? I rejoice to hear it!" said she. "For that very reason, allow me to remain with you, my dear aunt. You must not be left alone."

"I shall be only too glad of your company, my dear child," said she, joyfully, satisfied that Diana had already stifled in her heart whatever feelings of affection she might have entertained for Albert.

"And when does this marriage take place?" inquired Diana.

"The affair is not yet sufficiently advanced to be a subject for discussion between us," replied the Countess. "Better that we should seem to know nothing about it."

"I can wait till it be officially declared," replied Diana, "and without dying of curiosity."

At that moment, the Count entered the room. Again, Diana turned pale, but she

contrived to disguise her vexation, and bitter jealousy. Even Albert saw nothing: Having crossed the room, she quietly tied the strings of her straw bonnet, smiled at herself in passing the small looking glass, and retired with the dignity of a queen. All this pride vanished, however, as soon as she reached the inn; where, unnoticed, and unmolested, she gave vent to her grief.

Till now, she had been uncertain of her love for Albert, precisely because she felt sure of his attachment. But the shaft of jealousy having penetrated her heart, she saw how much she had deceived herself. She was eagerly anxious to learn the object of his preference; and in her wounded pride, thought that the woman must possess unheard of advantages, who could be preferred to Diana Neville!

She accordingly reviewed in her memory the names of the great ladies and rich heiresses whom Albert had ever mentioned to her. But

her conjectures were unavailing. She felt persuaded it must have been in some German court in the course of his last tour, that he had conceived some passion, which, at first hopeless, he had kept to himself.

His sudden determination to remain at P—— confirmed her suspicions. She fancied that he was to wait for some period previously agreed upon, and that he would set off for Germany to complete his marriage; nor did she for a moment suspect the real cause of his sojourn in an obscure village in Lorraine.

Towards evening, Albert set out to visit Madame Vialart. As he approached her house, the white walls of which he could not look upon without a palpitation of the heart, he was seized with such a sensation of joy, such ardour of hope, that he trembled to perceive the whole happiness of his future life depending upon the breath of a woman.

Lucy was in her garden, and did not hear the approach of the Count. On perceiving

him, an exclamation of surprise escaped her, and she involuntarily retreated a few steps.

"Pardon me, Madam! My presence is perhaps an intrusion?"

"Far, far from it!" was her ingenuous reply.

Albert was silent, but her answer had sunk into his heart. Apparently Madame Vialart fancied he had not understood her; for she did not attempt to weaken her avowal by an explanation. Repressing her agitation, she added in the peculiar tone that imparted a charm to her most common place speeches,

"I have received, to-day, a charming letter from your mother; who has returned me the furniture she allowed me to place at her disposal. Your departure is no doubt approaching, and you are come, I fear, to take leave of me?"

"No, Madam," replied he, offering her his arm to return to the house. "On the contrary, we remain here; and for that reason, my

mother has ordered furniture from Bar-le-Duc. We have now established ourselves at the inn; and, I trust, shall pass the whole summer in Lorraine."

Madame Vialart made no reply; but turned away her head, as if trying to subdue the emotions of her heart. She proceeded, however, gently leaning upon the arm of Albert.

It was one of those bright and genial nights, which resemble the lengthened twilight of summer days. The verdure of the trees did not as yet afford sufficient shade; but the delicate foliage of spring extended itself against the deep blue sky, like a canopy of the finest lace. Already had the violets, primroses, and lilacs, put forth their fresh and cheerful flowers, while from the peach and cherry trees in blossom, exuded a cordial fragrance.

"Let us remain here, awhile," said Albert, retaining Lucy at the entrance of the hall—"the night is heavenly!"

She consented. While the Count placed him-

self almost at her feet, overcome by such profound happiness, that he feared to give it utterance. Lucy also seemed absorbed by the influence of her emotions. Her hands clasped upon her knee, she raised her eyes to heaven, as if offering a silent prayer. At this moment, Albert intuitively sympathised in her silent joy. But her past life was still an impenetrable mystery; nor dared he conjecture what trouble, or what adversity, had so prejudiced her prospects as to determine her retirement from the world.

At one moment, he fancied she pined under some disappointment of the affections—or that she had been the victim of an early love—or had survived the object of her youthful passion. Still, there prevailed a chaste expression in the physiognomy of Lucy completely belying such suppositions. It was not the influence of the passions which had furrowed her pure and noble brow, or caused the tears to flow from those soft expressive eyes.

Vainly, however, did he seek to penetrate the secret of her mysterious life. He was like one who chances upon a book of which the early chapters are lost.

Both remained some time absorbed by similar impressions; happy with the happiness of mutual love, in breathing together the same perfumed air, in the charmed solitude of a lovely night.

At length, the Count whispered in a faltering voice, "If you only knew the delightful projects I have ventured to form for the summer!"

"Projects?" she replied, trembling and agitated.

"Yes! excursions with you in yonder beautiful woods, or on the banks of the Ornain. I am beginning to indulge in the hope of days of happiness!"

Gazing steadfastly at him she exclaimed, "And next winter?"

"If you deign to permit me," replied Albert,

taking her hand, "we will spend it together."

"You love me then?" said she, shuddering—"you really love me?"

There was a pause. Lucy partly withdrew her hand, and Albert drew nearer and nearer, conscious that the moment was come when he was privileged to inquire the truth.

"Dearest Lucy," said he, "I cannot doubt that some great misfortune has embittered your life. May I trust it is not of a nature to impede our mutual happiness?"

"*It is,*" was the faltered reply of the sobbing woman.

"You have a husband then still alive?"

"I am not married. The name of Vialart was that of my mother."

At this announcement, a painful feeling of jealousy, mingled with profound compassion, assailed his heart.

"You are the victim then of some dreadful misfortune?" said he; "you have been betrayed, perhaps abandoned!"

"No," replied Lucy, with an air of dignity and truth: "no—every action of my life has been pure and stainless. I am without reproach and without remorse. But I have suffered much, and have no further happiness to hope for in this life!"

She was silent a moment, overcome by agitation; but quickly resumed,

"You are a man to be trusted," said she, "and I will tell you all. I love you. I loved you from the moment of our first interview, and yet my hopes are limited to a few days more of happy intimacy; during which, we will think neither of the past nor the future! You must then leave me—for ever—and I will live upon the remembrance which will sufficiently console me in my solitude, and afford a store of happiness for my future life. You will probbaly forget me! Yet, when happily wedded to another, sometimes think of your poor Lucy."

These words, which revealed such complete and noble confidence—such inexperience of

the passions—such spotless innocence, filled the heart of Albert at once with grief and gladness. In course of time, he hoped to gain the confidence and subdue the resolution of his lovely friend. But suddenly, a strange surmise presented itself to his mind. He remembered anecdotes on which dramas and romances have been founded, of charming persons disgraced as belonging to the families of felons or executioners. He was horror struck!

"Lucy!" said he, in a tremulous voice—"one word more! You are innocent and pure—but the name of your father was perhaps dishonoured?"

"No!" replied she, with painful emotion, "I belong to an honourable family. The memory of my father is still revered. Ask me no further questions. I can tell you no more at present!"

"Enough—enough!" exclaimed he, full of hope and confidence. "What I have heard suffices. You are free, Lucy; you have loved

no one but myself; and neither the past nor the present shall deter me from making you mine!"

"Never!" she replied, with the most energetic resolution;—"my heart may break in the trial—but never, dearest Albert, never will I become your wife!"

CHAPTER IV.

The following day the Countess de Guercy and Diana visited Madame Vialart for the first time. Albert did not accompany them, but waited their return with intense anxiety. He dreaded the penetration of his mother in her interview with Lucy.

But the kind-hearted woman had little knowledge of human passion; and on seeing her son again, simply observed,

"I little thought we had so charming a neighbour! Really, Madame Vialart is a woman of distinguished manners, and I hope to see her often. You did not assign sufficient importance to an intercourse which promises so much that is agreeable."

Albert dared not answer. He was confused by the consciousness of having deceived his mother; and turning towards Diana inquired, "And what thinks my charming cousin of her morning visit?"

Miss Neville surveyed Albert with an expression of mistrust and mortification. "Your friend is certainly agreeable," said she, "but she has neither youth nor beauty to recommend her, and is too languishing and pedantic in her expressions for my taste. I scarcely understood her. What strange whim induces her to render so pale a face still more doleful by such a dress? Her appearance is that of a nun! I fear the lady is somewhat eccentric."

"Certainly," replied the Count, "if originality consist in exquisite grace, and being as distinguished for superiority of mind as for goodness of heart."

Diana blushed; his words had touched her pride as well as roused her susceptibility; and she now perceived with feelings of resentment

and surprise, who was the woman preferred to herself. The discovery only stimulated her to persist in her jealousy.

The Count's passion might be but a passing fancy of which he would soon grow weary, and marriage was perhaps out of the question. Notwithstanding the vehemence of her character, Diana was capable of dissimulation; nor was she deficient in acuteness of mind. She saw through the reserve of Albert as well as the blindness of the Countess, and had sufficient self-possession to appear unobservant of either. From that day Madame Vialart had an implacable and restless enemy; a rival, wounded in the two most sensitive of passions—pride and affection.

Every morning, the Count made long excursions, ending in a visit to the house of Madame Vialart, of which his mother was ignorant, and to which he never alluded. His position was changed. He was loved—he knew it; and though his happiness was uncertain, he gave

himself up madly to the influence of his passion.

Lucy began to dread these prolonged interviews. Yet in the walks she took with him every evening in the garden, her companion was always present, a precaution without which Madame Vialart would not receive the Count. The intimacy of these two women, and their mutual affection, was to Albert a source of endless wonder. Independent of their dissimilarity of character, their whole intercourse seemed replete with the most incomprehensible contradictions.

The one was resolute and submissive; the other feeble, yet preponderant. The energetic character of Eleanor yielded to the most trivial desire of Lucy; and yet these condescensions did not result from position, but the most unlimited devotion. It was the tenderness, the constant solicitude of a mother for a child in precarious health—an exclusive affection absoring all other feelings.

Lucy received this devotion with the deepest sense of gratitude; still, she evinced surprise at such complete abnegation, as if undeserving. Unconsciously the Count had conceived a kind of aversion to Madame Vialart's companion. He detested her masculine style of beauty, as well as an order of mind so devoid of grace or refinement. But in consideration of her attachment to Madame Vialart, he pardoned her want of distinction; as well as a pair of staring black eyes which expressed not only infirmity of intellect, but a certain mysterious exaltation of character, frequent in the looks of lunatics.

In this way, weeks passed on. The Countess had established herself at P., as if intending to remain there the rest of her life. She amused herself with her flowers, and her herbal was considerably enriched by the Flora of the banks of the Ornain. When unoccupied with botany, she resorted to her pencil, laid out plans, or wandered in the fields, question-

ing the peasants upon the resources of their province and their habits of life. She succeeded in establishing at P. what had never been known there, a coterie of a sociable nature. One evening, the priest and the notary took tea with her, to which Madame Vialart and her companion were also invited; and the little party lasted till midnight.

Diana would have been soon weary of this kind of life, had not her state of mind assigned importance to the most insignificant trifles, developing her instincts of coquetry. Never had she taken such pains to enhance her beauty, or shown so much ostentation in displaying her advantages, as in the little circle where she was opposed to Lucy. She felt a malicious pleasure in challenging comparisons betwixt her rosy and healthful face, and the pale and suffering features of Madame Vialart, as if for the gratification of her vengeance. But neither Albert nor Lucy heeded her manœuvres,

and she discovered, with feelings of bitter disappointment, that she had not succeeded in exciting either envy or regret.

In spite of the haughty reserve of her character, Diana now permitted the hostess of the Folly to approach her with a certain degree of familiarity. Perhaps this condescension was a matter of calculation. Perhaps she hoped to extract from Madame Babillon, information which no one else dared communicate.

One evening, Albert being at Madame Vialart's, and the Countess contemplating the treasures of her herbal, the hostess came bustling to Diana, who was alone in her room.

"You are not going out then, Mademoiselle?" said she. "The weather is charming, and the moon as bright as day."

"My aunt is not inclined to walk. With whom am I to go?" answered Miss Neville.

"If I dare, I would propose to accompany Mademoiselle. We might stroll along the

meadows as far as the White House. The road is beautiful."

"With all my heart," replied the heiress. "I shall be glad of air and exercise."

"Perhaps we may meet the Count. He generally walks towards the woods, and enjoys some three leagues of bad road. What a taste, to saunter through dirty fields, when one can go about in a comfortable carriage, on a nice smooth road, like that of Bar-le-Duc!"

They now set out, taking the high road as far as the White House, where Diana paused, and looked around her.

The moon threw a soft light over the vast meadows, watered by the Ornain, and through the lofty poplars, where the hawthorn hedge of the garden ran parallel with the high road.

"There are three persons yonder in the garden," said the hostess. "One of them must be the Count."

"Perhaps so," replied Miss Diana, motioning to the hostess to draw nearer.

"Does Mademoiselle intend to visit Madame Vialart?" said the hostess.

"Not I," replied Diana, haughtily. "I only enter the houses of my friends. In my opinion, my aunt has been rather precipitate in making this acquaintance."

"To be sure, no one knows the lady. She may turn out an adventuress," replied the officious hostess.

"I have long suspected so."

"She has, at least, plenty of money. But wherever does it come from?—marriage or inheritance? What stories flew about when she first came! A woman who is unprotected always looks suspicious. There are plenty of strange reports about her even now."

"Of what nature?"

"Some say that the Count is an old acquaintance, and is come to marry her."

"Marry her? Count Albert de Guercy marry a Madame Vialart!" cried Diana, laughing outright. "The people must be mad!

As if a young, rich, and well born man would marry an obscure and nameless stranger, who comes from Heaven knows where, and whose fortune perhaps has been realised behind a counter—perhaps much worse ! My aunt would never bear with such a connection ! She would disavow her son, rather than consent to such a marriage."

Diana had scarcely uttered these words, when she heard steps behind the hawthorn hedge, and a head suddenly thrust itself forward, and as quickly vanished.

"Who is there ?" cried the hostess, alarmed. "I certainly heard a noise !"

"A bird fluttering in the bushes," said Diana. "There is no one."

"Mademoiselle had better go home," said the hostess. "It may have been some beggar sleeping behind the hedge. Besides, there are so many dangerous persons on the high road."

At that moment, Albert made his appearance at the gate.

"Here is the Count," said the hostess "He will give you his arm."

"By no means," murmured Miss Neville, in an under voice; "not for the world!"

The Count did not even see them. An hour afterwards, Diana exclaimed, as she sat alone in her own room,

"Some one was certainly listening!—If it were only that woman, I should be satisfied."

CHAPTER V.

When Albert returned the next day to Madame Vialart's, he found only her companion seated in the drawing-room. Eleanor's manner announced greater absence of mind than usual. Her reception of the Count was grave and embarrassed.

"Madame Vialart is unwell, Sir," said she. "I fear she cannot receive you to-day."

"It must be very sudden," said the Count, with much anxiety. "Madame Vialart seemed so well yesterday evening. I never saw her more beautiful or more animated."

"I trust her illness will be short," observed the young lady, with a profound sigh.

There was a pause. At length, the Count observed,

"It is dreadful to live in this uncertainty! Dare I depend, Mademoiselle, upon your humanity for assistance? Since my love for Lucy is of no avail, and that she has not confidence in me to concede an explanation, tell me, what are the obstacles that divide us?—On my side, Heaven knows, there are none!"

Eleanor mournfully waved her head.

"You do not believe me!" replied he, with vehemence. "Point out then the obstacle to my happiness! Does not my position warrant my following my own inclinations? One person only in the world has a right to oppose my wishes, and in this instance, I am sure of her acquiescence. Lucy is free—belongs to an honourable family, and is pure and without remorse."

"She is a saint—an angel!" cried Eleanor, in an impressive voice.

"Still, some terrible and secret woe is con-

suming her, to which she resigns herself with fortitude. But I must and will know all. My sincere attachment confers the right. You who also adore her, aid me, oh! aid me in my attempt. Deign only to tell me what affliction weighs down her existence—what fatality has embittered her destiny. On my knees, I solicit the confession! Come with me, and unite your prayers to mine; and should she persist in her cruel silence, be yourself more indulgent."

"Impossible," exclaimed the young lady, in great distress, yet still detaining Albert. "Have pity on us, I beseech you."

The Count sunk into a seat. "Why, why did I ever come to this fatal spot!" cried he, in despair.

"Why, indeed!" repeated Eleanor, weeping. "Before she knew you, Lucy was at peace. Now, she is wretched! Her lonely position fills her with alarm. She turns her eyes towards the world of which you form a

part, and thinks with despair of being once more alone. Your departure will appear like the termination of her existence. Still, you must go—she knows it, and wishes it; but she knows not yet how much she will have to suffer. At some future time, in thinking of the beautiful and brilliant women to whom you are about to return, she will experience the anguish of jealousy, and the insupportable regret of being no longer loved. It was, indeed, a fatal day that brought you to the house."

The Count rose in great agitation.

"Farewell," said he. "I will return, for I *must* see her again. Be the moment of our separation now or later, I cannot quit her thus; nor will I accept the sentence which condemns us to an eternal separation. It is not my happiness alone which is at stake, but *hers;* and she shall not condemn herself to lasting misery. I will not submit till I am made to see the justice of my sentence. Tell all this to Lucy. To-morrow, we must meet."

Eleanor made no reply, and Albert boldly repeated: "Yes, to-morrow she shall listen to me—she shall yield to my prayers."

On seeing him about to depart, Eleanor held forth her hand.

"I intreat you," said he, "join your supplications to mine." And the pressure of her hand seemed to express acquiescence.

As Albert traversed the garden, he thought he perceived Lucy at the window, with her hands raised to heaven. But the figure instantly vanished, and he only saw the shadow glide away through the transparent curtains.

On returning home, he found Diana and the hostess conversing in the room which, till lately, had served for kitchen and dining-room to the party.

"Mademoiselle may rely upon what I have just told her. To-morrow, at four—though it will be scarcely daylight."

"Is it possible?" cried Diana, with an air of satisfaction. "And are you sure that it is Madame Vialart?"

As Albert approached, the two women became silent, while Diana looked at her cousin with malicious joy.

"You were speaking of Madame Vialart," said he.

"I may have mentioned her name," she coolly replied; "I forget in reference to what."

The hostess nodded her head, as if to say, "I understand, and will say nothing."

That night, all was quiet in the inn. The Count was alone astir, resigning himself to the most distressing thoughts and painful conjectures. His heart overflowed with love and pity; but bitter misgivings mingled with his compassion. He repented not having from the first exacted the avowal of the secret that so fatally influenced his destiny. By degrees, this moral fever augmented, till he would have given worlds to have shed tears at the feet of Lucy. He imagined her, pale and dejected; like himself, a prey to wakefulness and grief. At other moments, he thought of the early

death of the unhappy, and his anxieties became redoubled. In the course of the night, he went out for the relief of fresh air, and wandered towards the dwelling of Lucy.

The sky was overclouded, and the taper summits of the poplars, agitated by the coming storm, bowed their lofty heads. Lamentable moanings seemed to fill the air; and clouds flitting across the pale disk of the moon, scarcely allowed her light to cheer the dark and desolate scene.

A lamp flickered in Lucy's chamber; and Albert perceived with terror, shadows passing to and fro. Something unusual was going on. The Count stationed himself under the window. It was four o'clock. Day-break was at hand, when a travelling carriage drove up, and halted before the door. The post boy smacked his whip, at which signal, the door opened. Albert immediately perceived within, preparations for departure. Entering the house unobserved, he ran up stairs to the door of Lucy's apartment, where stood the two ladies,

attired in travelling dresses. On seeing him, Eleanor uttered a half-smothered exclamation; while Lucy fell, pale and fainting, on her knees by the side of her bed.

"Why have you come hither?" cried the companion.

"You have deceived me!" he replied. "Had I deferred my visit, I should have come replete with confidence, and found her gone."

"I promised nothing," replied Eleanor; "nor has Lucy deceived you."

"The other evening, the last time I saw her," said he, wildly, "she seemed calm and happy; yet, she knew it was for the last time! I left her, full of hope, full of security. She told me she would see me on the morrow. Was not *that* deceiving me, when I was to see her no more?"

"No, no, Albert, no! I did not deceive you," exclaimed Madame Vialart, in tears. "If you only knew——"

"Lucy!" cried Eleanor, with painful emo-

tion, "allow me, I beseech you, to justify you. Yes, Sir!" said she, turning towards the Count, "Lucy had no thoughts of going. It was I who have decided her proceedings; it was necessary she should leave you. Cruel imputations had been made in your family; not by your mother, but by your cousin. The pride of Miss Nèville revolted against an alliance which she regarded as degrading. A few days of delusive happiness, an intimacy as hopeless as unavailing, is all that Lucy or yourself have lost by an abrupt departure, and our position being unendurable, we resolved upon flight. To say farewell, was impossible. The pain of parting would have been too severe."

"But we will *not* part;—she *shall* not go!" exclaimed Albert, closing the door. "Listen, dear Lucy! this moment must decide our fate. I do not ask the motives of your determination, or seek to penetrate the terrible mystery which influences your life. I swear, on the contrary,

never to inquire. Keep it, as now, profoundly secret. But you have confessed yourself free. Forget the past, therefore, and from to-day, be mine!"

"You are all nobleness and generosity," cried Madame Vialart, extending her hand to Albert, "and give me courage to tell you all."

"How?" cried Eleanor, with horror.

"To tell him *all!*" deliberately repeated her friend. "I leave the rest to him and heaven, and will resign myself to their unmurmuring decree!"

CHAPTER VI.

Lucy now motioned to the Count to come and sit by her side; while her companion, concealing her face with her hands, exclaimed: "Allow me to leave you, I have not the courage to be present at this terrible revelation."

Daylight was just penetrating the muslin curtains, while the feeble light of an expiring candle flickered upon the scene of confusion and desolation produced by the preparations for departure.

At first, Lucy seemed absorbed by painful reminiscences. She appeared to be shrinking in horror from her own recollections. At length, clasping her hands, as if in supplica-

tion, she exclaimed in a plaintive voice: "Oh! heavenly Mercy, inspire me with fortitude and courage!"

"Dearest Lucy," whispered the Count, gently taking her hand, "why this hesitation? What is there to fear, when it is to me alone you are to confide your secret? My own Lucy! towards *you*, I should find such reserve impossible. To you I should confess my errors —nay, my crimes."

Tenderly pressing his hand, Lucy now assumed in a calmer tone,

"I am about," said she, "to recount the history of my life, in order that you may understand by what direful chances of destiny I was precipitated into the abyss in which my happiness, hopes and prospects have perished.

"My birth was signalized by an irreparable misfortune—the death of my mother. My father died a few years afterwards. He was a Receiver-general in the finance department, and supposed to be wealthy. But unsuccess-

ful speculations in the public funds had effected his ruin, and he left scarcely enough to liquidate his debts.

"I was extricated from utter destitution by an affectionate maternal aunt, who adopted me as her daughter; and never did a tender and affectionate mother foster an only child with more solicitude. My aunt had formed an alliance with a man of immense wealth."

Here Lucy paused, became as pale as death, a cold dew rising upon her brow and quivering lips. She hesitated, but by a strong effort, at length resumed:

"This person was the Marquis de Placy."

On perceiving that Albert heard this name pronounced with perfect unconcern, she breathed more freely, as if relieved from intense anxiety, and continued with less restraint.

"My aunt, the Marchioness, was handsome, young, and brilliant, and of a lively, sensitive disposition. She dearly loved her husband; loved him even to jealousy, for she was not

as happy as supposed by the world. Much as my aunt wished to superintend my early years, her impaired state of health required a more genial climate during the winter months; and she, therefore, confided me to the care of a woman of well-known merit, in whose establishment my mother and herself had been brought up, and where I found all the care and affection to which I had been accustomed. Oh! Albert, I grieve, even now, to think of those early years, so calm, so replete with hope and confidence—so fostered by assiduous affection.

"My first grief was parting with my aunt, who set out for a newly acquired estate in Provence, where she was to pass two years; the physicians having advised that climate, hoping to check the pulmonary complaint which was daily wasting her constitution. It was my most fervent wish to accompany her, or to rejoin her; but I was not till the close of a year, that she granted my request. My uncle, the

Marquis de Placy, came to fetch me from Paris; and, I must confess, testified for me such paternal affection, that I loved him almost as much as my aunt. I shall ever remember our arrival at the chateau de Bés! It was on a beautiful summer evening, about ten, and my aunt came to meet us on the steps. How pale, depressed, and emaciated she was! Still, however, she was handsome and pleasing. I think I see her now advancing towards us, her long dishevelled hair having a black veil thrown carelessly over it, to keep her from the night air.

"'My child,' exclaimed she, 'my dear child, here you are at last! Never shall you quit me again!'

"'Thanks, thanks!' cried I. 'Let me be always near you—always—always!' and as I kissed her cold wan hands, I made a vow never to quit her side.

"'Alas!' she exclaimed, with a shudder, 'it little becomes me to form plans for the future.

Come, dearest child, let me conduct you to your room. Enough for me if I dare reckon upon a single morrow.'

"Supporting herself on my arm, she quitted that of the young girl who accompanied her, saying,

"'Lucy, dearest, I am cold! I feel unwell this evening.'

"The young person who accompanied us, was Eleanor, who for some months had been the companion of my aunt. I had already been warned by my uncle of her presence at the chateau, and that she was to officiate as my governess. But as he said nothing of her age or appearance, I had expected to find a person resembling my former one, who was an ugly old woman.

"On beholding her, therefore, I was struck with surprise and admiration. Eleanor was then only twenty-two years of age, and beautiful—dazzlingly beautiful.

"No sooner was my aunt alone with me in

her room, than she began to weep. I saw that she was in trouble; but, not daring to question her, knelt at her feet, weeping also, and holding her hands in mine. By degrees, she became pacified, and bad me relate to her the details of my journey. When I dwelt upon my uncle's kindness, she seemed overcome with joy.

"'So much the better, dearest Lucy. Thank Heaven, he loves *you* still!' cried she, and I began to understand her uneasiness.

"'Dearest aunt,' I exclaimed, 'he loves you also.'

"'Then why is he absent at this moment? He has not even kissed me since his return!' said she, in a bitter tone, still reclining upon my shoulder.

As she spoke, my uncle entered the room.

"'Well, Julie, you are better, I trust?' said he, ceremoniously kissing her forehead; then perceiving that she was in tears, he added, in a dry and irritated tone,

"'Evermore this doleful countenance? It is incomprehensible! Does my return produce all this pain? You would do well, Madam, to moderate your sorrows!'—

"My aunt made no reply; but by a desponding glance at her husband, signified that she was in pain. Then, rising with a sudden effort, she threw her arms around my neck, faltering,

"'Lucy, my dear child, I am dying!' and sunk into so deep a swoon, that we thought she would never revive.

"What a night!—what a dreadful night! My poor aunt, senseless in my arms, seemed about to breathe her last; while the Marquis in consternation, watched by the side of the pillow. Eleanor, seated in the corner of the room, recited the prayers for the dying; but towards morning, my aunt rallied from apparently impending death, and in a few days, my grief and anxiety subsided. Though still frail and delicate, I trusted that my poor aunt might survive some time. Still, I was awe-

struck by the surmises of those around me, which I instinctively understood. Nobody smiled in the château. All was terror and sadness.

"My aunt was in such a state of languor, that it was my inexperience alone that blinded me to her approaching end. The poor woman regretted life. Her meek and patient soul rebelled against the dread decree of Providence. She seemed to contemplate with morbid jealousy the idea that the man she most adored in the world, might survive her, and one day console himself for her loss.

"She now became capricious and impatient, and I was the only one from whom she would willingly accept attentions. How much Eleanor endured from her injustice and mine! Poor Eleanor! You, dear Albert, can judge her disposition. To a somewhat prejudiced mind, she unites a character eager and impetuous, but capable of the most unlimited devotion. My aunt recognized only her faults. She

actually hated her, and I partly shared her aversion.

"During the first days of my stay at Bés, Eleanor was neither a friend nor companion to me. I treated her with a degree of distant politeness, that rendered all intimacy impossible; and she endured it with a patience which to this day amazes me. For now that I know her proud and disinterested soul I am convinced her conduct was unbiassed by motives of calculation.

"She had not the same respect for my uncle. More than once, I detected a certain degree of contempt in her deportment towards him. With him, she displayed her haughty and resolute character; which was surprising to *me*, who was still overawed by his grave and imposing demeanour.

"Six months passed away. My aunt still lingered, and my daily avocations near her being unvarying, it seemed to me impossible that I should lose her. One morning, she was

seated near the window, enjoying the warmth of the sun, and I had just placed before her a rose tree in flower, of which she adored the perfume. On a sudden, she began to tremble from head to food, and throwing herself on the sofa, exclaimed:—

"'Call them, Lucy! Summon your uncle, I must speak with him! Alas! it is perhaps already too late.'

"The whole family hastened to her assistance. But already cold with the damps of death, she moved her lips, but could not articulate. With some effort, she offered her hand to her husband.

"'My dearest Paul,' said she; 'I have nothing to bequeath. All I have is yours! This dear child is poor, but you are a man of honour, and will restore my fortune to her. This is my last request. Accept my forgiveness. Accept this farewell embrace.'

"And having uttered these incoherent words, the Marchioness ceased to exist."

CHAPTER VII.

WHILE recurring to this painful event, Lucy could not suppress the powerful emotions contending in her heart. "The death of my aunt was my first misfortune!" said she. "In her, I lost the only being who was dear to me; and as I looked around me, I trembled to think that I no longer possessed a home. I was bewildered. During the first dreary days, I seemed to fancy my aunt still alive, and proceeded mechanically to her bedroom door, forgetting that some days before, she had quitted it never to return. At other times, I fancied I heard her feeble voice, which had so often waked me from my sleep; and again listened, and again in vain.

"By degrees, however, my sorrows relaxed. My first agony gave way to a passive depression, and I began to look around me. Eleanor was satisfied that time alone could assuage my sorrow, and that it must exhaust itself by its own violence. But though sympathising in my tears, Eleanor did not experience sincere regret for the death of one who had never evinced the slightest affection for her. I understood this so well, that any manifestation of grief on her part would have seemed hypocrisy. She conducted herself, however, with the most decent sense of decorum and feminine dignity. My uncle remained silent and dejected; but it was easy to perceive that he had long anticipated this eternal separation, and that the expected blow came with diminished force.

"The Marquis de Placy was still young, and had been remarkably handsome; nay, he still possessed personal advantages. Though he had attained only the age of forty-five, I am

convinced that my aunt had never considered it possible he would marry again. His adoption of me appeared a matter of course, and my aunt's fortune and his own were expected to devolve upon me. I was his nearest relative, my father being his cousin german. I bore his name, and was his heir presumptive. My prospects appeared assured, for he would not hear of my leaving him. Having attained my eighteenth year, I was about to be presented in the world; it was decided that we should proceed to Paris, when I was to preside over his household; and Eleanor was to remain our inmate, as my companion and friend.

"At the expiration of his mourning, my uncle received with noble hospitality, at the chateau of Bés, all the distinguished personages of the neighbourhood, as well as visitors from Paris. Bés is situated on the banks of the Sorgue, not far from Vaucluse, the most picturesque country in France. The chateau

dates from feudal times, with fosses, towers, and vaulted terraces. But the internal arrangements are modern, in the refined and comfortable style of the day; which graces the dwelling of the old feudal baron, like a precious jewel encased in an iron coffer. It was a magnificent residence; and I felt proud of being styled the beautiful heiress of Bés; for I was accustomed to consider all this as my future inheritance, and enjoyed this enviable position in the utmost pride and security.

"But without knowing or desiring it, I excited a general jealousy, and was accused of the caprices and vanities common to heiresses, because I seemed to enjoy, without disguise, the advantages of my position. Our neighbourhood was composed of country gentlemen living entirely upon their estates, and for the most part people who disliked the idea of neighbours richer than themselves. Not one of them entertained a courteous feeling towards me. The men thought me proud, because

they foresaw that I should not choose a husband among them; while the women despised me, because I did not disguise my surprise at their singular style of dress, and provincial manners.

"Among the persons who frequented the château, was a single woman, of good family, ugly and poor, but so insinuating and prepossessing in her manners, that in spite of her personal disadvantages, and humble position, she had a certain influence in society. She was admitted every where. Inquisitive, cunning, loquacious, of an uneasy and meddling mind, she interfered in every body's affairs, and passed her life in retailing whatever she conjectured or imagined. She enjoyed the enviable *sobriquet* of 'the Daily Advertiser.' Nevertheless, she was not advisedly mischievous; and I have fully pardoned the injury she has done me.

"A year had elapsed since the death of my aunt. Winter was set in, and my uncle already

talked of returning to Paris. His habits of life had of late varied; Bés seemed to possess little charm for him, and he made frequent excursions to Marseilles. His bearing towards myself was embarrassed and uncertain. He no longer manifested the same affection towards me; and I saw that he was in a preoccupied state of mind, of which I could not guess the origin. Poor Eleanor was also a victim of this change. My uncle, who had been uniformly kind to her, no longer treated her with courtesy, and it seemed that the presence of both of us was irksome. During the long absences of my uncle, receiving no one, we led but a dull life. He might have allowed us to accompany him once to Marseilles; which is but twenty leagues from Bés.

"Eleanor observed all this with deep regret. She attempted to remonstrate with my uncle; but he replied in so absolute and stern a tone, that she withdrew in tears.

"One evening, on Christmas eve, we were

alone in the chateau. My uncle had left us, announcing that he should not return till New year's day. We were seated by the fireside, when a knock at the door startled us, and in came the Daily Advertiser, claiming hospitality for the night.

"'Thank heaven!'—cried she, looking round her with a busy air, 'I am arrived at last! I was anxious to see you, dear young ladies, for I have not been here this month or more. What is the news here to-day? What is going on?'

"'Nothing, positively nothing!' replied Eleanor. 'We must ask *you* for news.'

"At this request, Mademoiselle de St. Luce drawing up to her full height, and resting her angular chin on her bony hand, replied in a mysterious tone, 'I have, I admit, something to relate. It is a strange affair, and but that I know the story to be authentic, I should venture to doubt. I am come from one of my relatives, just arrived from Marseilles, where they say that the Marquis de Placy is on the point

of marrying a girl of sixteen, fair as day-ligh and rich as himself.'

"'It is impossible!' cried I. 'My uncle is not so mad as to marry, at forty-five, a mere child.'

"'A man in love has not the right use of his senses,' observed the old maid. 'I am told that your uncle is no wiser than others!'

"Eleanor could not contain herself!—

"'I am convinced it is not true,' said she. 'It is a mere idle report!—Monsieur de Placy could not think of marrying again.'—

"'No,' said I, thoughtlessly. 'It shall not be. I will prevent it, if necessary.'

"These words, though an imprudent presumption, did not express a threat. The eager old maid did not seize the right sense of my expressions.

"'And how, pray,' said she, familiarly. '*how* could you interfere? If your uncle were acquainted with your intentions, perhaps he might feel offended or anxious.'

"I made no reply to this retort, and put an

end to the interview, though not to my uneasiness.

" When once more alone with Eleanor, 'There is not a shadow of probability in what she says,' said I. 'It must be a mere invention!'

"'Who knows?' she replied. 'You are not acquainted with the impetuous disposition of your uncle. You know him not as I do.—I think it far from improbable that time will confirm the rumour.'

CHAPTER VIII.

"Some days after this, my uncle returned unexpectedly to Bés. I was alone when he arrived; Eleanor, ill and nervous, not having quitted her chamber for a week. He appeared more serious than usual, and I could with difficulty repress my painful anxiety, preoccupied as I was by the recent intimation of Mademoiselle de Saint Luce.

"My suspense was not of long duration. The Marquis took me into his study, and addressed me in a tone of determination, that admitted of no remonstrance.

"'Lucy!' said he, 'it is time I should inform you, that the projects I had formed are

changed. I am going to be married again; but trust in the step I am about to take, to reconcile you with the prospects of your new position.'

"I remained silent, my soul harrassed and depressed; but I swear to you, Albert, that neither anger nor resentment influenced my feelings. I at once made up my mind, and replied with perfect sincerity, 'If this marriage make you happy, I shall see it with pleasure, dear uncle, and will try to deserve the friendship of your wife.'

"'You will find her very young,' said he. "But she is not the kind of girl whom a family is anxious to get rid of. I met with many difficulties, and have made many concessions. Her mother seemed alarmed by the present arrangements of my family; apprehending your reluctance to cede the control of my establishment. She consequently exacted that your position be decided, previous to signing the settlements.'

"'You wish then that I should marry!' exclaimed I, with terror.

"'I do not say that. You are only eighteen,' replied he, coldly, 'and there is no hurry. While waiting till a proper opportunity presents itself, you must return to the house in which you were brought up, accompanied by Eleanor, unless she prefer returning to her family. At all events, I shall assure her independence.'

"I now began to weep bitterly. It was not the loss of my fortune, or position in the world I regretted; but the sudden interruption of a long and continued affection. The man, who for twelve years had cherished me as his daughter, and whom I respected like a father, now forced me out of his house! Fain would I have thrown myself at his feet, and prayed for an employment, a menial one, in the house, wherein I had expected to pass my life. But pride forbad! I left him, therefore, saying that I waited his further commands, and

that, on the morrow, I should be prepared to start.

"I hastened to relate all to Eleanor, who turned pale with rage and indignation, at my disclosures.

"'I scorn his generosity!' said she, vehemently. 'I will go! But he shall learn from me that this marriage is impossible! No, it shall never be! He shall be made to see the folly of his project! He does not wish to make himself, as well as *you*, miserable. Let me speak to him, Lucy. I will go in search of him.'

"Vainly did I attempt to prevent her. Dreading that the violent temper of my uncle, and the energetic character of Eleanor might produce a scene which we should all regret, I waited the return of Eleanor, in the utmost uneasiness.—But she did not make her appearance!—I went to the door, and heard my uncle talking in an angry voice, which made me tremble. A moment afterwards, she

left the room in tears, her features expressing the greatest indignation.

"'We must leave our home!' said she. 'He has decided it. *We*, Lucy, who would have sacrificed our lives rather than have been an obstacle to his happiness.'

"At the usual dinner-hour, nobody sat down to table. Eleanor retired to her room, I remained alone. For my part, I was resigned, and made my preparations for departure. Though out of spirits, I felt neither anger nor resentment; and, unlike Eleanor, pardoned my uncle for having sought his happiness elsewhere than in our care and affection.

"About nine o'clock, the valet-de-chambre of the Marquis entered the room in which Eleanor and I were sitting, apparently full of anxiety.

"'The Marquis is unwell,' said he. 'He is, however, determined, ladies, to start for Marseilles to-night, and has ordered post horses for four o'clock.'

" ' His presence there may be indispensible,' I observed carelessly.

" ' All is arranged,' resumed the man, ' and the marriage is to take place the day after to-morrow.'

" ' We must leave this, then, to-morrow!' whispered I to Eleanor; who, without a word, rose and quitted the room.

" Soon afterwards, I myself retired, without finding sufficient courage to take leave of my uncle. In passing his door, however, I paused and forgetting the cruel indifference with which he appeared to quit me, remembered only his former love and tenderness, till my heart was ready to break at the idea of our approaching separation. I would have given worlds to embrace once more the friend I had so long looked upon as a father.

" In the dead of night, I heard a strange confusion in the passages, as of servants calling aloud for help. At length, there was a knock at my door; and my own female attendant

presented herself. 'The Marquis is worse,' said she; 'nay, I fear he is dying.'

"I flew to his room. Eleanor was already there; and dreadful was the spectacle before us. There lay my uncle, his head thrown back, his eyes open and fixed, his face livid and ghastly, while his arms were thrown about in convulsive struggles.

"'It is an attack of apoplexy,' said the valet, 'we must immediately send for assistance.'

"'Let horses be saddled,' said I, hastily, 'fly for advice!—lose not a moment. Let several of you take different directions, that we may the surer find assistance.'

"At this moment, I am satisfied that Eleanor regretted having provoked the anger of my uncle. She now stood apart, in a state of complete consternation; while I remained close to the bed of death, alternately expressing hope and fear; now alarmed,—then pacified by the invalid's apparent tranquillity, which proved to be complete insensibility. Thus

passed the night, in anguish and terror. Towards morning, my uncle breathed his last, without having uttered a word!

"I retain but an indistinct remembrance of the days that followed this painful event—so unexpected, so dreadful, that it all but destroyed me. I left the arrangement of our worldly affairs entirely to the men of business, and shut myself up with Eleanor; who, like myself, was plunged in profound stupor. When lo! this state of apathy was dispelled by the sudden arrival of the officers of justice; the attorney-general himself making the most minute and humiliating inquiries!

"In the sequel, Albert, in the sequel, I was taken into custody, accused *of having poisoned my uncle!*"—

A dreadful pause followed the utterance of these words. At length, Madame Vialart resumed:—

"You must now," said she, "dear Albert,

perceive the horror of my position. You know all."

"Proceed, dear angel," exclaimed he, falling at her feet. "*Thus* let me listen to your narrative. Your fate is, indeed, cruel, but reveals nothing that ought to estrange my affection."

"I was thrown into prison," resumed Lucy, "accused before a tribunal, and confronted with the scaffold!—What would have become of me at this direful moment, but for the devotion of Eleanor!"—

"But on what grounds rested your accusation?" cried the Count.

"Public report accused me," continued Lucy, "and various conflicting circumstances tended to justify the accusation. Mademoiselle de Saint Luce had repeated the fatal exclamation which escaped my lips on hearing the first news of my uncle's marriage; and it was interpreted in a sense which supposed the

most deliberate and wicked premeditation. Various members of the household knew that, during the long illness of my aunt, I alone possessed the key of the medicine chest, containing some most active poisons; for, like others tormented by long and painful disease, she had often recourse to the use of opium; when it was I who used to prepare the doses, and had the management of this formidable drug.

"After the demise of my aunt, the chest still remained under my care. The violent and sudden death of my uncle gave rise to a suspicion of poison; and as the event placed me in possession of the fortune which had been so nearly lost to me, the finger of public accusation pointed at *me*. At first sight, the charge seemed fraught with probability. The body of my unfortunate uncle was disinterred, and the physicians made the most contradictory reports; some declaring him dead of apoplexy, others, that they had discovered traces of poison!

"Justice, however, continued its course, and I was confined in the prison of A——. Oh! Albert; judge of my situation. A young and innocent girl, till then surrounded with love and consideration, who had lived in peace and purity in the condition assigned to her by Providence, now plunged by an unheard-of visitation, into an abyss of crime and ignominy!—

"A guiltless conscience did not at first suffice to support me, and I sunk under the weight of this dreadful accusation. In the midst of my distress, one whose devotion has never swerved, came to my assistance; the only one, alas! in the world, who did not doubt my innocence—my dear Eleanor! Could you but know her devotion!—under every trial, every sacrifice, it has supported me.

"I will not dwell, Albert, upon the terror and anguish arising from these unjust proceedings, or my appearance before my judges, and the multitude present at the trial, animated

by the most atrocious curiosity. I had neither sufficient strength nor courage to defend myself, and only answered their imputations by asserting my innocence.

"Mademoiselle de Saint Luce and many others were heard as witnesses; their vague and confused depositions lending little aid to the cause of justice. Eleanor, in her turn, appeared, and explained the various occurrences of the fatal night. One alone, the most important, could not be made sufficiently clear. Neither she nor I could account for the disappearance of a box of morphine, the existence of which in the medicine chest was attested by witnesses, as well as by my own confession.

"Alas! this box had disappeared during the first inquiries. No sooner had the suspicion of poisoning reached the chateau, that it was, probably, clandestinely withdrawn, with the best disposed view, by some imprudent friend. The women who served me were most faithfully attached; and, perhaps, one of them—but

why indulge in surmises?—the truth could never be ascertained.

"I had now sunk into a state of exhaustion, which had the appearance of indifference; and seeming impassibility condemned me only the more in public opinion. My agony was prolonged during four dreadful days, when I was acquitted, for want of proof. But the acquittal did not re-establish my fame. I remained, and must remain, for ever branded in the eyes of the world.

"I now determined to retire to some spot where my name would remain unknown, and where I could live in peace with Eleanor. I even thought of going beyond the seas; but my attachment to my native soil prevented me, and I sought a spot in France, to which I could retire for the remainder of my life. Here I hoped to have found it. This country has a soothing aspect, affording repose to the soul. Nature is calm and peaceful, and the imagination does not wander beyond its limits.

"Having taken possession of the immense

fortune which reverted to me by this sad event, all such arrangements were easy; but, as a rich heiress is usually exposed to unwelcome intrusions, I declared myself married. Here have I resided for years, in peace, if not in happiness. Lucy de Placy has ceased to exist, and Madame Vialart, the poor woman doomed to waste her existence in solitude, would fain have taken her place. The Almighty has otherwise ordered my destinies.

"Albert, my Albert, you know now the invincible barrier which separates us. Branded by a public accusation, I cannot sully by my alliance a character spotless as yours. In giving me your name, you would not redeem me, but sink ignominiously to my own degraded condition. I love you too well to allow such a proof of love and self-sacrifice. You must leave me!"

Lucy would now have risen from her seat, but Albert detained her.

"Can you suppose, dearest," cried he with

unspeakable emotions of pity, devotion, and passion, "can you suppose my affection so weak as to flinch from the unjust destiny to which you have fallen a sacrifice? Can you suppose I will abandon you, when I feel certain of your love; or coldly sacrifice you to I know not what scruples or chimeras? Your secret is still sacred in this neighbourhood, since I only am acquainted with it. You may easily re-establish yourself in your true position in the world. You have just said that Lucy de Placy exists no longer. It is to Madame Vialart that I shall give my hand!"

"But your mother, Albert," exclaimed Lucy.

"She would know nothing till she loved you enough to do you justice. Forget the past, my beloved, and date your life from the day of your arrival here. Lucy—Lucy!—days of happiness are in store for you."

"You little know," said she, "how happy I am already."

As they sat forming delicious projects for the future, the sun began to shed luminous gleams along the curtains, and irradiate with a golden hue the animated features of Lucy. Suddenly, a sound was heard at the door, and Eleanor made her appearance.

"Let me not become ungrateful in my happiness," cried Lucy. "Dear Eleanor, so faithful to me in my days of adversity, thank heaven in my behalf, for vouchsafing me far more than it ever took away."

In the course of the day, Albert acquainted his mother with his choice. The old lady, inquiring into nothing, thought it the most natural thing in the world that her son should marry a beautiful young woman, with millions for her dowry. Even when she made some inquiries as to her birth, and Albert replied that she belonged to a respectable family, the Countess was fully satisfied.

"It is of little consequence," said she. "She will renounce her own name when she becomes your wife."

Miss Diana and the hostess of the "Folly," had the satisfaction of learning the news which was causing such sensation in the village of P——.

"Here is an event, forsooth!" cried Madame Babillon; "I told you, Mademoiselle, something would come out in the end. The Count and Madame Vialart have known each other for some time past, I warrant."

"I tell you, *no!*" vehemently interrupted Miss Diana. "The supposition is absurd. How could my cousin have possibly met such a woman? It is mere chance that has brought it about."

"Chance, and the whims of Mademoiselle!" replied the hostess, with a cunning look. "If you had not wanted lamps, arm-chairs and carpets, I should not have borrowed them of Madame Vialart, the Count would not have gone to thank her, and most probably, not have married her at all."

"What signifies the origin of the evil?" cried Diana, unable to contain herself. "Suffice it,

that the marriage is a disgrace to our family. What will they say in the world, when my cousin presents his wife; and the Count de Guercy, after having visited all the principal cities and courts of Europe, and seen all the handsomest and richest heiresses, marries an obscure inhabitant of a village in Lorraine! I am told she belongs to a respectable family, a fact my aunt communicated to me with her accustomed indifference. Who can swear we are not deceived, for no one knows her here? Why and wherefore came she to this place? —There is certainly some mystery in the affair!"

"Indeed I cannot guess, nor can anybody at P—," replied the hostess. "As Madame Vialart receives no letters, one cannot see by the postmark with whom she is in communication. Some time ago, an elderly lady, changing horses here, inquired if there were not two ladies, whom she described, living in the country. She made many inquiries, and probably

knew Madame Vialart. But she had not time to stay and visit her."

"Ah!" said Diana, "if she would only return!—The mystery might then be unravelled."

CHAPTER IX.

When after having submitted to a long course of affliction, and yielding to the weight of despair, better days succeed, the human soul views with mistrust the approach of happiness, and the smiles of the world create as much alarm as enjoyment. Deeply conscious of this, Lucy listened with fear and trembling to the seductive hopes that thrilled the heart of Albert. The marriage was to be celebrated at P——, in the charming retreat where she thought to end her existence; after which, they were to travel for several years.

Diana witnessed these arrangements with apparent calmness and indifference. Her pride forced her to dissemble; but in her soul, she

writhed under the torments of a jealous hatred, of which Albert now was the object. Her excessive sensibility had been keenly wounded, both in her pride and the consciousness of mental superiority;—nor could she pardon the woman whose humble advantages had been estimated above her higher order of beauty.—That the obscure Madame Vialart should be preferred to Miss Diana Neville, the noble heiress whose first appearance in the world had been greeted with such acclamations, was not to be endured.

One day, the Count and his mother being with Madame Vialart, the hostess ran with the wildest glee into the room in which Miss Diana sat at work.

"News, news, Mademoiselle!" cried she. "An old lady has just stepped out of the Nancy diligence, inquiring in all directions for Madame Vialart, Mademoiselle de Placy, as she calls her. Martine was going to conduct her to the house, but I stopped her. If Ma-

demoiselle would only come down—as if by chance."

Meanwhile, the old maid, Mademoiselle de Saint Luce, had remained in the dining-room, and was making inquiries of the servants, fancying she might have been misled by wrong instructions. Advancing straight to Miss Diana, she addressed her in her usual reedy voice.

"My pretty young lady," cried she, "can you tell me, pray, whereabouts two strange ladies reside, who have been in this country these four years past?"—

"I know a lady, a Madame Lucy Vialart, and a companion of the name of Eleanor?"—replied Diana.

"Exactly, exactly!" cried the old maid. "But why call herself Vialart?—Is Lucy married?"

"She must be a widow," replied Miss Neville, "for she is on the point of giving her hand to the Count de Guercy—an honour she

could have little dreamed of, under all the circumstances."

Fancying that a knowledge of the past was implied by these words, the old maid thought Diana must know all.

"Ay, ay! I see what you mean!" said she, dipping her fingers into her snuff-box, and fixing her cat's eyes on the stranger, to watch the effect of the words she was about to utter. "Nobody is better informed on the subject than myself! I was in the habit of visiting the Château de Bés, and quite at home there. The poor dear Marquis de Placy was so fond of me! It was there I became acquainted with Mademoiselle Lucy, and knew all that passed in the house. It was I, in fact, who heard—but I must not mention that! For I was a witness in that business, and it is probably my deposition that saved the life of Mademoiselle de Placy."

"The life?"—exclaimed Miss Diana, with an air of wonder and horror.

"I even fainted dead after the trial! Just imagine, Mademoiselle, what a spectacle! A girl of eighteen accused of poisoning her own uncle! And then, the judges, the jury, and the lawyers in their black robes, and the populace crying without for vengeance on the murderess—for so they called her! It was a dreadful scene. But innocence triumphed. She was unanimously acquitted. All right-thinking people now respect her, and I do not fear to speak to her. I had some trouble to find her out. But her man of business informed me she had purchased an estate in Lorraine; and one of my nephews having been appointed receiver general in the department of the Meuse, I became his security; and recollecting Lucy and her immense fortune, am come to request the loan of thirty thousand francs. Such is my errand; I do not care who knows it.—Thank Heaven, there is no mystery in *my* affairs!"

During this tornado of words, Diana sat

breathless, her looks announcing the most eager attention. Behind her, stood the hostess, listening with a vacant stare—her roast turkey, meanwhile, scorching on the spit.

"But are you sure, Madam, that you are not mistaken?" said Miss Neville, having regained her breath. "Are you *sure* that the young lady accused of poisoning is this same Madame Vialart?"

"I will soon go, and bring back my proofs," replied the old maid, furious that her veracity should be questioned.

"Allow me to accompany you," said Diana, politely.

"And I too!" cried the hostess. "What a fine story all this would make for the play-actors!"

The little circle of Madame Vialart had, on that day, been joined by the parish priest of P——; and they sat talking cheerfully round a crackling fire, autumn having already set in.

The Count and poor Lucy were luxuriating

in the prospects of their proposed Italian tour, and enlarging upon the care with which they intended to visit the monuments enriching that country, and the years that would pass previous to their return ; while the Countess de Guercy was engaged in discussion with the priest upon toleration and other serious matters, and Eleanor sat apart working as usual in the window.

On a sudden, the door was flung open, and the servant announced, " Mademoiselle Agathe de Saint Luce, and Miss Diana Neville."

Instantly overcome by a nervous trembling, Lucy arose ; but her strength failed her, and she fell to the ground ejaculating—" Albert, I am lost !"—

Though himself pale and trembling, he flew to her support, while Eleanor uttered piercing shrieks for help. The Countess de Guercy meanwhile sat astounded by the incomprehensible scene.

" What joy to see you once again !" exclaimed the old maid, advancing towards Eleanor

with open arms. But on perceiving the cool amazement with which she was received, she added,

"Do I disturb you, Mademoiselle? If so, I will instantly withdraw."

"Not yet, Madam," said Diana, detaining her. "You must repeat before the Countess de Guercy and her son, what you have just related to me. You must declare the real name of this woman, who calls herself Madame Vialart."

"What am I to say? I know nothing—I will repeat nothing!" exclaimed the old maid, retiring towards the door in dismay.

Diana eyed her with contempt.

"You are afraid, then?" said she, "afraid to utter the truth! It is I then who will speak. Count Albert, the woman to whom you are about to give your name, has been openly accused of a crime that might have sent her to the scaffold! She has passed through the ordeal of a court of justice!"

"I know it!" said the Count, fixing upon Miss Diana a look that caused her to turn pale. Then, advancing towards the Countess, he added,

"Pardon me, dear mother, for wanting confidence in you, or doubting your nobleness of soul, and sense of justice, so far as to have concealed from you the unjust affliction of an innocent life. Dear mother, you now know all. Come, come, my Lucy! Between our hearts shall be your refuge for evermore!"

"I need no explanation to believe in your innocence, my poor child," said the Countess. "I know you to be pure and irreproachable, and have courage to decide for myself."

In a moment, poor Lucy was at the feet of the Countess.

"Thanks—thanks!" cried she, overcome by feelings of unspeakable gratitude; "thanks, dearest of friends! Your words will remain a source of constant consolation to my heart. But deeply as I am indebted to your gene-

rosity—to your attachment to Albert and myself—I cannot accept the sacrifice you would make. My determination is irrevocably fixed. Never will I marry Monsieur de Guercy. The revelation which has taken place, unseals my eyes. Let this be the sad moment of our parting—of our last farewell!"

"Lucy—Lucy! it is impossible!" exclaimed the Count.

"Let us not exhaust our fortitude in an useless struggle," resumed Lucy, mildly; "but bow to the inexorable law of fate. I neither doubt your love nor devotion; I know you would sacrifice your position in life, and the consideration that surrounds you; but such sacrifices would overwhelm me with remorse. The woman to whom you give your name, must be beyond blame or suspicion, and *I* am eternally branded! No, Albert, nothing can redeem me. We must part!"

She rose—gazing wildly around her, as if

to seek the accustomed support in her hour of adversity.

" Eleanor !" faltered she ; " my poor, faithful Eleanor !"

" I am here," replied her companion, appearing at the threshold of the door.

No one had noted her absence during the interview of Lucy with the Count. But now, turning towards the spectators of this harrowing scene—" There must be witnesses to what I am about to divulge," said she, in a broken voice. " My declaration must be public. Admit every one in the house !"

Then, turning towards the priest, " Sir," said she, more solemnly; " I intreat you to receive the confessions of a dying woman."

A look of anxiety was visible in all their faces. Every eye was fixed upon Eleanor, whose face was becoming of livid and death-like paleness, while her body was universally convulsed. Throwing herself upon her knees, in the attitude of a person receiving sentence of death :—

"I declare, before God and those present," said she, in a firmer voice, "that Lucy is innocent of the crime of which she was accused. It was I who poisoned the Marquis de Placy!"

Lucy started back in horror. A faint murmur was audible in the little assembly; after which, all was silent, save the oppressed respiration of the spectators.

"Yes," exclaimed Eleanor, "I poisoned him, as the reward of his perfidy, and the consequence of my own frailty; for, during the life-time of his wife, he had solemnly pledged himself to become my husband. Yet I had not courage to yield myself up to justice. Had Lucy been condemned, I swear by all that is holy, she should not have gone to the scaffold! Pardon me, therefore, in this dreadful hour, my dear unhappy friend! To-day, I have wrought a work of expiation. Your happiness required that I should forfeit my life—I have given it you. Grant me, dear Lucy, in return,

grant me—for the last time—your hand in token of pardon and peace!"

Scarcely had the miserable woman pronounced these words, when she was seized with frightful convulsions; and when laid on the bed, Lucy stood over her, weeping, and exclaiming—

"I do—I *do* pardon you! May God pardon you as I do. But, alas! who is to save you from the retribution of human justice?"

"*Death!*" replied the criminal, in a hollow voice. "The same hand—the same means which destroyed the Marquis de Placy, have secured me from the scaffold."

* * * * * *

Even now, so many years after the afflicting events described in the foregoing narrative, it is grievous to reflect that a union so happy as that of the young Count and Countess de Guercy, should have had its origin in a catastrophe so appalling, May the blamelessness of their lives be accepted in atonement of the

double crime of the unfortunate Eleanor, whose life and death afford a lesson to all who are prompt in pointing the finger of scorn upon persons on whom the precipitation of human judgment has affixed an unjust STIGMA.

MATRIMONIAL POLICE.

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CHAPTER I.

Set a thief to catch a thief?

Among the guests present at the ball of Madame de Gabriel, on the last Thursday of the carnival of 1835, was a gentleman in his forty-sixth year, in whom this maturity had not sufficed to extinguish the youthful delusions of the heart. After beginning life as page to the Emperor, he had become a private secretary and prefect under the Bourbons; till at length, retiring to the *otium cum dignitate* of private life, at the revolution of 1830,

the Baron de Livernais supported the reverses of his official career with a degree of philosophy, arising, perhaps, from an income of thirty thousand francs per annum.

Compelled to relinquish the self-importance of office, he sought compensation in the pleasures of society; and quitted the country for Paris, the only stage on which a man who condemns himself to the career of fashion, can find sufficient scope for his talents.

At the epoch when Monsieur de Livernais came to this determination, he had twice numbered his years of discretion ; and after firmly resolving never to grow older, at least in appearance, had kept his word. As is usual with thin men, his shape was little impaired ; his eyes retained their vivacity, and his teeth and hair seemed little disposed to exchange their colours, as usually occurs at the approach of the fiftieth year. The Baron might, in fact, still be cited as a good-looking man, of distinguished air and elegant manners ; and his

renown, as a conqueror, echoing by the trumpet of scandal, appeared to those who saw him for the first time, far from apocryphal.

Monsieur de Livernais was too tenacious of his fame as a lady-killer, ever to lose sight of the pretension. Affixing value to every species of conquest, he did not despise the vulgar triumphs of a man of fashion, and danced and waltzed with the enthusiasm of a schoolboy; placing his chief vanity in his lightness and elasticity as a performer of the then fashionable galop.

One night, contrary to his custom, the Baron had not thought proper to offer his indefatigable efforts to the criticisms of less alert spectators. Some mysterious emotion, more powerful than even vanity, suggested this momentary self-denial. Stationing himself at the angle of a quadrille, he stood watching with close attention two of those episodes which sometimes vary the monotony of ball-rooms, and contain the germ of a romance.

Observant to the right and left, the Baron was careful to conceal the powerful impressions he was receiving on both sides.

The first object of his scrutiny was a lady dancing in the quadrille near which he stood, about twenty years of age, who would have been proclaimed queen of the ball, were it still the custom to proclaim the sovereignty of grace and beauty. Her person and demeanour merited the most unqualified admiration, exacting the suffrage of the artist no less than of the man of the world. In her dress, though of the most enchanting elegance, a single object was within reach of criticism; a garland of oak leaves, picturesquely interwoven in her black hair, of which the green diadem seemed to enhance its velvet lustre.

This druidical head-dress produced the effect anticipated by the deviser A dozen times since she had entered the ball, had the words, "'Tis Norma!" struck her ear; and

she was right in considering them a just and deep-felt homage to her beauty.

The partner of this lovely woman was young, but fat and under sized; in compensation for which physical defects, he possessed a most expressive smile—a sure indication of intellectual superiority. He was as admirable a talker, in fact, as he was a wretched dancer; and to figure in a quadrille, must have had some powerful incentive, sufficiently evident, perhaps, in the person of the lady by his side.

Fixed behind this remarkable couple, Monsieur de Livernais stood listening attentively, but with his eyes directed elsewhere. In spite of the Baron's affected air of indifference, the fat partner was on the alert. Aware that a third person, though silent, may be troublesome, he looked at the intruder with an air of defiance, and resumed the conversation in English the fair one replying in the same language, regardless of the intimate nature of the concession. In the world, an acquaintance

with foreign languages is only too favourable to dangerous confidences, which accounts for our modern predilection for that branch of study.

Educated under the Republic, by halves, or rather by quarters, the Baron bit his lips on finding himself thus distanced; and as it was useless to listen longer, his attention directed itself towards another episode, passing at a short distance.

The principal personage in the second scene, was one of those lanky youths, who affect intensity of physiognomy, and emulate in the profusion of their locks, Samson of Nazarene; trusting to their sallowness of complexion to create a profound interest.

The hero in question, was seated at the extremity of a vacant bench, with the air of a man meditating some direful crime. The ladies who had been originally placed at that end of the room, being young and pretty, not one of them had been reduced to that mortifying

inaction. All were dancing, and most of them had left some object to mark their respective places; one, her nosegay—another, a fan—the third, her handkerchief.

Upon one of the latter, the pallid Adonis fixed his eyes in tender contemplation, after having gazed around him with an air of mistrust and hesitation. At length, persuaded that, masked as he was by one side of the quadrille, he must be free from observation, he was emboldened to perpetrate his projected iniquity. Stealing along the bench till he reached the handkerchief, he dexterously insinuated a letter into one of its embroidered corners; then replaced it in the precise spot where he had found it, and departed as he came.

Having resumed his place, he wiped his brows, moist from the strenuous efforts he had made, and again looked wildly around him. There was nothing to warrant such agitation. Some of the people near him were dancing, others talking. Nobody heeded him. Con-

vinced, at last, that no human eye had witnessed his audacious proceeding, he was waiting patiently the result, when a hand tapped him on the shoulder. The pale young man started, and turning round, found himself confronted with Monsieur de Livernais, who had threaded his way among the dancers, the better to attain his victim."

"Monsieur Regnier," said the Baron, "Madame de Gabriel wishes to speak to you. You will find her in the red drawing-room.

The young delinquent of the shaggy mane, fearing to awaken suspicions by a moment's hesitation in acquiescing in the request made in such formal and urgent terms, quitted the room; having taken a lingering look at the depository of his secret, confided it to the merciful divinities who preside over the destinies of the tender passion.

Shortly after his departure, the quadrille was finished. The Baron took advantage of the confusion to glide along the bench, as if to

make way for the ladies; but suddenly dropping his hat, in picking it up, he artfully seized the handkerchief which he concealed in the crown. Having accomplished this feat of legerdemain, he went his way with a degree of unconcern to have been envied by a professional thief.

Immediately afterwards, the lady to whom we have alluded, returned to the scene of petty larceny. Her first impulse was to seek her handkerchief. But she searched in vain, and vainly inquired of her neighbours. No one could give her the slightest information on the subject.—It was gone!

"There must be dishonest people, then, at Madame de Gabriel's?" said she to her partner, who had reconducted her back to her place.

"There are dishonest people everywhere," replied the fat gentleman. "The other day, they robbed me of my purse in the lobby of the Opera."

"A purse, I can understand; but of what

use is an embroidered handkerchief to a thief?"

"It might be of some value, had he sense enough to address himself to *me*," replied the gentleman.

"Do you think he will?" inquired the lady, smiling.

"I doubt it, if you are of a contrary opinion."

"You think, then, that I am acquainted with the guilty person?" demanded the lady, in the tone with which women, in defiance of the dictionary, confer a flattering sense upon the word guilty.

The pursy partner remarked the expression with some vexation. Conscious that by persisting, he might assign importance, possibly interest, to an act hazarded by one of his rivals, he adroitly turned the conversation; and in the interim, Monsieur de Livernais quitted the room, near the door of which he encountered young Regnier.

"You were mistaken, Sir," said the young man. "Madame de Gabriel had nothing to say to me."

"Indeed!" replied the Baron. "I conclude I made a mistake."

And with a smiling bow, he passed on.

It is not unusual in ball-rooms for little billets, more or less ingeniously folded, to find their way to their address, postage free; an abuse for which the postmaster-general has as yet found no remedy; and there are readers who evince no disinclination to learn the contents of missives conveyed through this illegal channel, but receive them with delight, conceal them with care, and read them with caution. Even men, though by nature more prudent than the fairer sex, are as easily beguiled. If, at the end of a quadrille, you see a happy mortal with beaming eyes and preoccupied air, steal out of the ball-room, seek the least frequented part of the room, take up a book from the table, and turning over the leaves, sit down

in a corner so as not to be overlooked, be sure that the revenue has been defrauded to the amount of a two-penny postage.

The favourite study for perusing such billets, is the quiet whist-room, a region closed against scandal and curiosity;—for whist-players are men of a serious turn of mind, looking no further than their cards, for whom, so long as the rubber lasts, there is no world beyond the deal.

To this tranquil spot, Monsieur de Livernais directed his steps. Seating himself in an arm-chair, he carefully unfolded the momentous handkerchief, and without confusion or remorse, read the note spread out in the palm of his hand. During the perusal, his lips expressed a scornful sneer, which he was about to recommence, when he was suddenly accosted by one of the whist-players, who had just risen from his rubber.

The individual in question, was a man about thirty years of age, whose careless style of dress

evinced a total disregard to the personal pretensions of all votaries of fashion. The pensive manner in which he inclined his head, rendered his fine open forehead still more prominent. His eyes had that feverish and vague look, often the result of excess of intellectual labour; and the dense circle surrounding his eyes, had evidently a higher source than dissipation and pleasure. This pale and meditative face announced the martyr of art or science; who, in the strife and thirst of a glorious ambition, sinks under the influence of his idol, as Jacob trembled in the arms of the angel, but summoned fresh energy to renew the combat, till it ended in death or victory.

"What are you reading there?" said the stranger to the Baron, earnestly surveying him.

"Something curious, and likely to interest *you*," replied Monsieur de Livernais, regardless of the interruption. "Promise to keep your

temper, and I will read you one of the most amusing declarations of love you can possibly imagine."

"Addressed to *you?*" inquired the whist-player.

"Those addressed to myself, I keep to myself," said the Baron, with a smile of ineffable self-sufficiency.

"Then why hesitate?"

"Because, had I done what was right, I ought to have made over this letter to you without reading it. But the demon of curiosity prevailed. I could not resist the temptation of beholding a specimen of a modern love-letter; and most diverting it is, upon my honour!"

"But what have I to do with the letter?"

"Behold, my dear Colonge!" said the Baron, exhibiting the treacherous handkerchief.

"That handkerchief belongs to my wife," said Colonge, calmly examining it.

"I was not sure whether you would recognise it," replied the Baron. "You have so

little of the Othello in you! I congratulate you on your quick-sightedness. And now, give me your attention."

The Baron proceeded to relate the audacious adventure of the pale young man, whose conduct he burlesqued, with some skill in mimicry; terminating his recital by giving up the letter he had intercepted.

In spite of its diminutive dimensions, the manuscript represented the value of ten pages octavo. So minute was the writing, that to decipher it rapidly, required the eye of a woman or a jealous man. It included all the ingredients usually contained in such performances, when literary pretensions, on the part of the writer, are united to the poetical exaggeration of youth. Stars dazzled, and angels flapped their wings in every line; while Æolian harps vibrated to the fragrant breeze of the evening twilight.

As usual, he enlarged upon the inappreciable treasures of the heart of man, in depositing

so inestimable a treasure at the feet of his idol; and in conclusion, Monsieur Felicien Regnier, the unknown and embryo Dante, undertook, on the shortest notice, to achieve a name equal to either Petrarch or Byron, provided Madame Colonge consented to become his Laura or Haidee. His letter, in short, was in the usual florid style of youthful authorship, which possesses considerable charm for milliners' apprentices, promoted to the rank of divinities.

"Well, what say you to these proceedings?" inquired the Baron, of the husband, whose wife Monsieur Felicien Regnier had selected for his Haidee. "Can you imagine audacity more unprincipled than the pretensions of this foolish boy?"

CHAPTER II.

INSTEAD of replying to the Baron, Colong put his wife's handkerchief coolly into one pocket, and the letter of Felicien Regnier into another, apparently absorbed in reflection.

"The cares of matrimonial life, are, perhaps, the bitterest cares of any!" said he, after a pause. "To be the owner of such a treasure as a young and lovely woman, is to be a prey to constant anxiety. His vexations are never ending—still beginning. His life is an endless struggle. He must expect neither pity nor courtesy from enemies ever on the watch to attack him; but fritter away his mind in absurd alarms. I, for instance, who for these two

months past, have been working fifteen hours a day in my anxiety to finish my picture for the exhibition, (and it is no trifling task to cover a canvass twenty-eight feet by twenty!) I, who. to-day have not dined, and only quitted the easel to dress and come to the ball, at this moment, am molested to a degree that is bringing on a feverish attack. I am so dizzy, that every thing around me seems to vibrate. Just now, I fell asleep at whist. I have certainly a right to some repose. But no!—No repose for an anxious husband! If it suit some idle fool to address my pretty wife in the language of gallantry, I must defend myself, and take up the gauntlet thrown down, or the finger of ridicule will be directed against me! What a destiny!"

"Excellent!" exclaimed Monsieur de Livernais, laughing. "Pity yourself, I entreat you, to be married to one of the most beautiful women in Paris, in whom you do not choose others to see the same perfection as yourself. My dear

fellow, a wise husband certain of his wife's affections, triumphs in her success.'

"In that case, I am anything but wise," retorted the artist, "and cannot reform my nature."

"But habit is second nature, and you will become accustomed to the universal admiration commanded by Madame Colonge. Remember, this is the ninth victim since the beginning of the winter."

"Seven, we said, the day before yesterday," replied Colonge, calmly; "counting that little ape, Regnier, it only makes the eighth."

"And your friend La Berthonie, the ninth," added the Baron, smiling maliciously. "Believe me, I am right."

"La Berthonie, too?" exclaimed Colonge, with an air of doubt and vexation.

"Yes, my dear fellow, poor stuffy La Berthonie, whom you regard as the truest of your friends, because he goes about proclaiming you the first colourist of the day, and protests that

all others compared with *you* are mere daubers; in return for which eulogiums, he presumes to adore your wife. On her account, he has even recommenced dancing; and lest one should overhear their conversation, forsooth addresses her in English."

"La Berthonie, too!" repeated the husband with an air of despondency.

"*Tu quoque Brute?* Yes! the thing is certain. Of the nine admirers we just now counted, he appears to me the most dangerous—if there *could* be danger in the case of an angel of purity such as Madame Colonge."

"I see they will not give me time to finish my picture!" said the hapless artist. "In spite of my forbearance, I shall be forced to send a bullet through one of their heads, that others may learn how to behave themselves."

"My good Sir, you are mad!" said the Baron, "I have already told you so. A man like you, full of promise and talent, risk his

life against such automata? Fie, fie! In such an act of rashness, there is everything to lose and nothing to gain. Should you fall, what a loss to the arts! If, on the contrary, you resent the silly presumption of one of these imaginary Lovelaces, your task were endless."

"No matter!"

"It would be the history of the Lernian hydra. Trust me, pacific measures are the best. Lay aside your sanguinary intentions, and I will continue your faithful and vigilant protector. You cannot, I imagine, be dissatisfied with *my* services?"

"Far from it," replied Colonge eagerly, "I know not how to express my gratitude."

"It is I who ought to be grateful, for an opportunity of rendering service to a friend, and at the same time, amusing *myself*."

"The thing amuses you, then?"

"Prodigiously! I cannot describe to you how much it diverts me. There is something so original in taking the husband's part."

"Perhaps, for the first time in your life?" observed the painter, attempting a smile.

"*Perhaps!*" replied Livernais, with an air of self-conceit; "and it is that which amuses me. But at fifty, one cannot do better than make amends for one's former indiscretions by serving the cause of morality. Do not think, however, that I would act by *every* one as I have done with you. But you are above the ordinary level of married men; as warm in heart as brilliant in head; and since not one of these conceited coxcombs is worthy to enter the lists with you, I declare war against them, all."

"May such noble conduct be, sooner or later, amply recompensed," replied Colonge, gravely.

"It is, already. Do you count for nothing the pleasure of seeing those irresistible young gentlemen, who make their appearance in the field, with their noses in the air, sneak away,

with drooping tails and falling ears? Can you not picture this to yourself?"

"I seem to see nothing!" replied Colonge, with a fretful air.

"Do not reproach yourself," said the Baron; "it cannot well be otherwise. Constantly employed upon a work which engrosses all your faculties, how are you to bring into the world that freedom of mind, that calm imagination, yet wakeful eye, so requisite for observation? With your gigantic combat of the Cimbri in your head, it is impossible you follow the manœuvres of the Lilliputian army hovering round Madame Colonge; whereas lounging and idling constitute *my* vocation. Unable, like yourself, to devote myself to great things, I must content myself with small. Trust to me, therefore, as your substitute. If *you* see nothing, nothing shall escape *me*. I am an old stager, fit only for the post of observation, where I am at home and can even detect a lover before he is aware of being in

The two friends returned together to the ball-room, and proceeded towards the lady, beside whom, they found Monsieur La Berthonie, apparently more at his ease than when displaying his portly person in the quadrille. Relieved from impertinent spectators, he had resumed the conversation in French, as there is nothing more difficult than to do the amiable in an unfamiliar language. Possessing a quick and sarcastic mind, and incited by the desire to please, anecdotes, witticisms and piquant remarks flowed inexhaustibly from his lips. A man of such resources must necessarily be acceptable to a woman, in point of society; yet, from the apparent indifference of Madame Colonge, it might be inferred, that she took little pleasure in his conversation.

At a short distance, ensconced in the recess of a window whose red hangings set forth the striking paleness of his face, stood Felicien Regnier, his eyes riveted upon his Haidee. At every smile of her stout partner, the young

poet knit his threatening brows; and the more radiant the face of the one, the more gloomy the brow of the other. It was a duel between an elegy and a madrigal.

"There are your wasps, in fierce opposition to each other," observed Monsieur de Livernais, touching the elbow of his companion. "Since you say you have no talent for observation, take a lesson. Remark the position of each. La Berthonie is clever, and talks with facility upon all and every thing, no matter what, provided he talks. His efforts are directed to the ear rather than the eye. Some women condescend to listen to these ugly men when thus amusing; nay, they even shut their eyes as they listen; and could La Berthonie obtain that favour, he were a match for the Apollo Belvidere. Have a care, Colonge! The serpent of the terrestrial paradise was not handsome, but had a forked tongue. As to the little poet, quickness of speech is not his forte; but his silence assumes the pensive

love. I thus discovered, in the twinkling of an eye, how matters stood with Regnier and La Berthonie."

"How am I to rid myself of these two wasps?" inquired the artist in despair.

"Leave that to *me!*" said Livernais, with confidence. "I am a scarecrow to gay gallants, and do not esteem these two much braver than their seven predecessors. Give me my own way, and I undertake to free you from them in three days."

"In what manner?"

"In the first place, give me Regnier's letter."

"But—is it right to—?"

"I must have it," persisted Livernais. "Have you no confidence in your friend? Do you mistrust me?"

"Not in the least," said Colonge. "*Here* is the letter; and now, what will you do with it?"

"I will tell you, hereafter. Now, I have

only one thing to ask you. There are races to-morrow, at the Croix de Berny. Madame de Gabriel intends to go, and I know from good authority, that your wife wishes to accompany her."

"Has she spoken to you on the subject?"

"My dear friend, between the confidence of the husband and the wife, I should have more than enough. To return to the subject, you must use your marital authority to decide Madame Colonge to accompany Madame de Gabriel; which, as she desires it, will not be very difficult. I, as well as Regnier and La Berthonie, shall be of the party; and I promise you, they shall have enough to do to circumvent my guardianship."

"How so?"

"That is my secret."

Colonge paused. "I know," said he, "you are a man of your word. Do as you please."

"The party must be arranged immediately. Come and speak to Madame Colonge."

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Byronian attitude; his style of writing is not the less inflammatory. These manœuvres of quills and paper, with their pale faces and exterminating glances, sometimes achieve a triumph. Trust them not, my dear fellow."

"To whom am I to trust?" faltered the painter, in despair.

But at that moment, on seeing the two friends approaching, Madame Colonge turned a deaf ear to the compliments of Monsieur La Berthonie, and addressing her husband with a resentful air, exclaimed:

"At last, then, you are come to look after me! I am really in luck! Whist must be very attractive———"

"What business has a man in a ball-room, who does not dance?" replied the artist, with a smile.

"You might look at the dancing of your wife."

"If I followed my inclinations. But what would your partners say?"

"They would speak English!" whispered the Baron, glancing, with a smile, at Monsieur La Berthonie. The stout gentleman was not the man to decline giving thrust for thrust.

"You seem to dislike English," said he. "I thought you understood it. Surely, Lady Osborne gave you a lesson?"

Monsieur de Livernais had lately received a severe rebuff from one of the most charming Englishwomen of the Faubourg St. Honoré, to whom he had presumed to pay his addresses; but in which the English language had little concern. This allusion, anything but complimentary to his prowess in gallantry, produced a conscious blush on his cheek. He gave an indignant glance at Monsieur La Berthonie, who far from being alarmed, eyed him in return with a sarcastic smile. The admirer of Madame Colonge, and the man who had constituted himself her protector mutually regarded each other like two dogs on the eve of a fight; when, as if by a tacit understanding they faced about. The

artist appeared to remark this significant dumb-shew and glanced towards his wife who replied by an arch smile.

"Monsieur de Livernais, has just informed me," said he, "that you wish to accompany Madame de Gabriel to the steeple-chase, to-morrow?"

"I should certainly like it, if you have no objection," replied she.

"Am I so great a tyrant, then?" retorted Colonge, with a smile.

"Will you accompany us?" said she, smiling in her turn.

"And my picture, dear Aurélie?"

"If you know how much you make me detest painting, you would never mention it again."

"You may detest painting as much as you please, provided you do not detest the painter."

"I love him dearly, when he is kind and obliging."

"How can he oblige you, then?"

"By coming with us, to-morrow. You could surely spare us one morning."

"When my picture is finished, I shall be at your service," replied the artist, who in the ardour of his vocation, regarded the loss of a day as a positive calamity.

"Let us talk no more of it," said Madame Colonge; "it is three o'clock, and I am tired. Pray inquire for the carriage."

Of all the orders a husband receives from his wife, that which releases him from duty at a ball, is the one most scrupulously executed. Colonge, who like most of his fellow artists, could ill spare a night's rest, hastened to leave the room, and as quickly returned. As they were about to proceed to the carriage, they were met by La Berthonie, Felicien Regnier, and the Baron de Livernais, waiting their passage like so many sentries.

The lady smiled graciously at the first,—slightly noticed the elegiac countenance of the second, and looked indignant at the third, when

somewhat more familiarly than the others, he took leave of her. The painter saw little of all this, or at least affected blindness. In the carriage, the painter and his wife remained mutually silent and reserved.

"What a charming evening we have had!" said Aurélie, at last, tearing her bouquet to pieces.

"Charming!" replied the husband.

"Some people find balls a bore; for my part, I could dance my whole life long without being tired."

"You were much amused then?"

"Much!—I did not miss a single dance."

"Did you dance with La Berthonie?" inquired Colonge, with seeming indifference.

"Three times," replied Aurélie articulating the words abruptly.

"And a charming partner you must have found him!—Berthonie is as clever as he is fat," said the painter, satirical in spite of himself.

"He is not so very fat," retorted Madame Colonge with a somewhat forced vivacity. "His appearance is agreeable; I consider him an acquisition to my acquaintance."

The painter was silent, though all he had learned from Monsieur de Livernais, did not tend to please him. But it was with difficulty he resisted the inclination to sleep arising from the monotonous rolling of the carriage. On finding her husband abstain from all contradiction, Madame Colonge, more and more irritated, attempted another species of attack.

"Madame de Gabriel, ought to be satisfied with her party," said she; "every thing succeeded to-night. There were so many beautiful women, and distinguished men. *Apropos*, have you heard any one speak of the poem, about to be published by Monsieur Regnier, called "Mists and Dews." They say it is a remarkable work, and such as Lamartine might be proud of."

Aurélie waited in vain the answer of her husband; but finding him mute, she looked at him, so as to force him to speak. Overcome by the fatigues of the evening, the artist sat resting his head in the angle of the carriage, and in spite of cares, jealousies and love, was in fact fast asleep!—

Madame Colonge contemplated him with feelings of indignation.

"If I had talked of painting," thought she, "he would not have fallen asleep. Beyond his easel, nothing interests him. If any one try to please me, or pay me attention, he is not even aware of it:—no fear of losing my affection ever occurs to him. His art appears the only thing worthy to interest him. Art—fame—glory—how I hate the words!—Actually to fall asleep while I was talking!—How is it possible to retain one's love for such a man?"—

Aurélie wrapt in her cloak, now ensconced herself in the opposite angle of the carriage.

But instead of dozing like her husband, she fell into a train of meditation. Such reveries are not, perhaps, altogether advantageous to matrimonial happiness!

CHAPTER III.

Previous to his marriage, Colonge, more from carelessness than diffidence, had neglected his talents. Like many other artists of merit who shrink from considerable undertakings, he devoted himself to less important works not because they were easier than historical pictures, but because they were more quickly executed. Every time he took up the pencil, he racked his imagination to find subjects for a small canvass; rejecting those great conceptions, the execution of which would have carried him beyond the limit his indolence had assigned. To obtain a moderate reputation by moderate exertions, was the end and aim he frankly avowed. As to

permanent fame, the glorious aim of every real artist, he regarded it with the eye of the sparrow, who perched upon a twig, views with indifference the stormy region into which the eagle soars above his head.

"Glory!" he sometimes ejaculated with a sneer. "If she beckoned me to her arms, I would not be at the trouble to advance. A great name is too great a burthen."

It was in vain his friends used to assure him that genius ought not to be inert.—"You have no right to be indolent," said they. "By working the surface of the mine, instead of plunging into it, in place of a vein of gold you will find only rubbish. You waste in trifling designs, talents which, if well employed, would serve to render your name immortal. Remember that one unique and strenuous effort leads to immortal fame. Géricault owes his renown to a single painting."

"I am not a Géricault!" replied the artist modestly.

"You may become one. Have you no desire to bequeath your name to posterity?"

"What matters whether my works survive me, provided they enable me to live in comfort?" persisted Colonge.

This prosaic answer closed the mouths of the officious counsellors.

In tropical countries, there are lands so fertile, that labour seems superfluous. It requires only to rake the earth, and strew the seed, to produce an abundant harvest. The talent of our young painter resembled these favoured lands. However superficially sowed, they produced fruits denied to more arduous efforts of industry. It was impossible to be more successful at less mental cost. In a short space of time, and without effort, Colonge had achieved a considerable reputation; always, however, in proportion to the style he had adopted. But the insignificance of the result, was no mortification to him;—if the little produced had cost but little trouble, it was all he required.

To the greater number of artists, the epoch of marriage gives the signal for relaxation and apathy. For Colonge, on the contrary, it became the source of new ambitions; —the Capua in which the young artist had hitherto been imprisoned, being reduced to ashes in the following manner.

One evening, at a party to which he had escorted his wife, Colonge heard the following conversation betwixt two men behind whom he happened to stand.

"Who is that charming woman, dressed in black?"—inquired one of them.

"It is a Madame Colonge," replied the other. "Is she not beautiful?"

"Admirable!—is she a married woman, or a widow?"

"Faith, I know not. I think though there must be some individual of that name in the room, either a musician, a lawyer, or professional of some sort; but who ever heard of him? Defunct or living, there

is no husband possible for such a divinity as that."

Colonge felt inclined to prove his existence by chastising the author of the impertinence. He, however, refrained; but the indirect affront he had just received, dropped into his heart the seed of one of those energetic resolutions, which influence the destiny of a man, and unfold a new horizon to his eyes.

"The facetious gentleman was right," thought he, with a bitter irony. "Formerly, my existence was a blank, and I am now becoming a complete nonentity! Aurélie is so beautiful! By her side, even a superior man would be scarcely noticed; and I, a nobody, must necessarily vanish. Such costly diamonds should be set in gold—I am merely copper. Before my marriage, my modest name possessed a value, more or less deserved; but it was all my own. Now, I have forfeited that individuality—unpretending as it was. I am no longer Colonge—but the husband of Madame

Colonge; and I have thus achieved insignificance, by the means through which a girl achieves the honours of matronhood. Have I in fact, so much as the standing of a Canoness of Munich?—I doubt it!—Many husbands serve as a mere label to their wives; but such a portion will not suit me!" resumed Colonge, with a feeling of indignant pride. "I am not made for such utter insignificance as to be the parasite ivy, when I feel as robust as the rugged oak. No, no! Beauty may be a queen, but genius shall be emperor; and genius, or at least the germ of genius, I possess. When single, I trifled with my task; but what was then indolence, would now be cowardice. It is no longer a question of reputation; my welfare is at stake. No sooner shall my wife remark the contempt with which I am treated, than she will despise me. To work then! Let us fight for honour, if not for victory. So so! yonder insolent personage, knows not whether I am a musician, or a lawyer?—Before a year

shall have elapsed, he shall recognise me as an artist."

For the first time, Colonge heard distinctly that divine and mysterious voice, which from the depths of a human soul, reveals the secrets of fate. Pride took the place of enthusiasm. So long as he had flattered himself into faith in his own strength, he had mistrusted it; but once contested, his credulity returned.

Fervent and indefatigable, Colonge did not waste in useless reveries the purpose he had assumed. With a disdainful hand, he rejected the slender brush, the contracted canvass and diminutive easel, which till now had served his views of art. He substituted deep reflections for slight sketches; in lieu of feeble imitations of Watteau and Greuze, he studied with profound attention the old masters. All this was soon whispered in the Parisian world of art; a report producing malicious sneers upon the lips of more than one of his acquaintance.

"Have you heard the news?" said one. "Colonge is engaged upon an historical painting for the next exhibition at the Louvre."

"Impossible!" replied another, "you mean upon some Swiss peasant on the border of a lake, or a shepherdess gathering daisies."

"An historical painting, I tell you;—the Battle of the Cimbri."

This pompous announcement, was received with a shout of laughter. The idea of a combination between the brush of Colonge, and the sword of Marius seemed irresistibly droll.

"You need not laugh," said the man who communicated the news. "The thing is certain, though no one has seen the picture. It is a profound mystery. Colonge allows no one to enter his studio—not even his wife. The effect will be astounding. Colonge neither eats, drinks, nor sleeps. The only place where one occasionally meets him, is the Gallery of the Louvre, where he goes to study the Spanish masters."

details of his work developed themselves, Colonge experienced that glow of fanaticism, without which the best efforts are cold and colourless. Hitherto, he had relied solely on his knowledge of art. Enthusiastic for success, he now gave vent to the impulses of his soul.

"This is painting in earnest!" said he. But such moments of triumph are rare; and when the artist found his palette unequal to the soarings of his imagination, he relapsed into doubt and anxiety. A mist seemed to overhang his painting;—the colours seemed dull and flat—the outline compressed and false,—the atmosphere wanting in transparency—the ground in solidity. A want of general clearness displeased him, and the best conceived groups, appe[illegible] no better than indistinct [illegible] he had before [illegible]ief, seemed [illegible]tening—an [illegible] false ef-

fect of shade, plunged him into despair. Just as in moments of enthusiasm, he exulted in the merits of his work, at other times, he underrated and disparaged it, and proclaimed himself a lost man. But whenever there shone forth anew a ray of that divine sun which illumines the imagination of artists, the courage and confidence of Colonge were restored.

By turns fervent and depressed, the artist pursued his work, despising alike the sneers of envy, and the perfidious homage of his colleagues. Nothing could allure him from this sedentary and laborious life; when, at the setting in of winter, he was beset by one of those conjugal perplexities which husbands rarely foresee, but always resent.

The wife of Colonge was young, rich and handsome. That the three wreaths—of youth, wealth and beauty, should create a crown of thorns, appears inexplicable; but so it was. On her appearance in the world, Aurélie became the object o[illegible] at importunate adora-

tion, to which women adopted by the caprice of fashion, must inevitably submit;—the object of a profane crusade, which every day enlisted a fresh recruit in its unholy army. The race of lady killers is essentially imitative, and the story of Panurge's sheep forms their true illustration. Many who, left to their own instigations, would have scarcely remarked the painter's wife, became her enthusiastic admirers, the moment it was the fashion to find her charming; and the number of pretenders increased with alarming rapidity.

The new Armida, at first deceived as to the nature of their admiration, perceived only the attention due to her beauty, and supported her triumphs with such ingenuous self-possession, that already her rivals taxed her with consummate coquetry. Colonge, though absorbed by his work, took alarm at the first success of his wife, just as a horse recoils on approaching the brink of the precipice. Jealousy, that

fatal foe of wedded life, transfixed him with one of her envenomed bolts.

For several days, the artist, depressed by anxieties heretofore unknown, neglected his easel to devote himself to one of those marital studies, the exclusive interest of which obliterates all other cares. Assuming a necessary degree of caution, he watched Aurélie closely, and found her as we have described her, ingenuous in her desire to please, enjoying her success but not exulting in it. Her virtuous heart and playful mind, promoted to the throne of fashion, resolved to exercise—"*sans peur et sans reproche,*" the sceptre conferred by her beauty. The result of this scrutiny tranquillized Colonge for a time. But he had still misgivings for the future. So many women adhere to only one half the device of the chevalier Bayard!—

In subjecting Aurélie to this close and severe scrutiny, the artist could not fail to discover certain ambuscades in which were

posted the enemies of his domestic happiness. Each of these destroyers of conjugal peace, proceeded upon a system consonant with his character. One confined himself to the humble demonstrations of devoted and timid affection. Another rushed into extremes of the most chivalrous and exaggerated gallantry; while a third, an engineer in love, masked himself in the entrenchment of respect, calculating the moment in which he dare divulge his project. Another, an incarnate elegy, waited with his sullen face, in the hollow way of fantastical exaltation. The various phases of social life were represented in this unprincipled crew. Independent of indigenous competitors, there was a Russian diplomatist, and a Spanish refugee. Exotic and native enemies were arrayed against his peace!—

After sternly reflecting on the different stratagems of the admirers of his wife, Colonge fell into a state of despair. The number of chances against his retaining the undivided affections

of Aurélie, was alarming. Surrounded on all sides, exposed to unforseen, varied, and endless attacks, how could he hope that no impression would be made on her feelings!

Occupied as he was in his vocations, how was he to defend her young heart against these bold assailants? Several projects presented themselves successively to his mind. The most efficacious seemed to be to withdraw her from the perilous amusements of the world; inspire her with a taste for domestic life, and retire with her into a seclusion inaccessible to temptation; in a word, to realize, amid the turmoil of Parisian life, that dream of double solitude, so dear to loving hearts. Such an idea, was indeed delightful, both to the artist, the lover, and the husband!

But how imbue a woman reared in the presumptuous frivolities of modern education, with the grave and dutiful feelings, prompting the Roman matrons to the worship of their lares and penates? How persuade a young

bride to forego the joys and pleasures she conceives to be the legitimate privilege of her new position? How violate the promises he had made her in their days of courtship?

"She might fairly accuse me of tyranny," thought Colonge, reflecting upon the consequences of such a project. "At thirty, I shall have to pass for an Arnolphe, or a Bartolo; and after once giving way to that system, to be consistent, I must resort to duennas, bolts, and barred windows. For Aurélie would submit with reluctance and regret. In her heart, she would rebel, and why provoke rebellion? The pleasures of society present to *her* the charms and attractions suitable to her age; and she plays with her diamonds, dress, and equipage, as she did with her playthings, when a child. This thirst for pleasure, will cure itself by the time she is better acquainted with the world, and the value of its praise; but abruptly checked, would generate mischief. That which is a childish whim, would become

later an absorbing passion. To succeed, I must be prudent. The plan must proceed from herself, not from me. I would have *her* say, 'Enough of the world; let us live for each other.' God grant my wish may be accomplished!"

Conscious of the necessity for patience and forbearance, Colonge sought means of defence suitable to the dangerous grounds upon which he was compelled to stand; his best defence seeming to lie in unceasing and indefatigable vigilance. In Paris, jealous husbands are rare. It is not, however, unexampled for a man to become a fixture in the chamber of his wife, like a creditor in pursuit of a refractory debtor;—to dress when she dresses—read the letters she receives—follow her in her walks—to church, balls, or visits; in a word become her gaoler at home, on the plea of affection; and in the houses of her friends, post himself so as to watch every movement, and listen to every word, knit the brow when she waltzes, or

bite the lips if a distinguished man approach her;—preserving an invariable scowl, whether she be gay or sad, and forcing her away from an agreeable party, with the ferocity of a wolf, carrying off its prey.

But the more the artist dwelt upon the details of such an existence, the more did he recoil from the attempt.

"Such conduct is not love," said he, "but despotism!—I will not become a spy. The woman who requires watching, is not worth the pains of the watcher."

The system of seclusion as well as that of inquisition being rejected, the one as base the other as dangerous, one resource alone remained:—that of adopting the philosophical tranquillity, the solace of so many of his colleagues; a kind of matrimonial fatalism, which resigns itself to all emergencies, like the Turk, who sees his dwelling in flames, and sits with his arms and legs crossed, smoking his pipe.

But though the artist possessed too much

sense to shut up his wife, and too much pride to watch her, he had also too sincere a passion for her to quit the helm of this richly freighted vessel of happiness and rely upon his star, while listening to the first howlings of the storm. He knew full well that fortune favours the brave; but that as applied to marriage, fatalism, is a perilous doctrine; and consequently rejected this third hypothesis as disdainfully as the other two.

After wounding his fingers in trying to grasp a branch of this briary subject, Colonge remained painfully perplexed; eager to decide, but infirm of purpose; convinced of the danger of inaction, yet, in the fear of impairnig his position, compelled to conceal a jealousy as acute as it was passive.

"After all, what is there to fear?" thought he. "Aurélie loves me, and her attachment is a coat of mail, against which the most artful shafts will be aimed in vain."

From this reflection, he gathered courage;

but on witnessing anew the devoted attentions paid to his lovely wife, became again discouraged.

"What a wret I become!" cried he, "where is now aiety, and where my lightsome heart?— ar ago I was happy! Why, why, did I ; or at all events unite myself with so ting, so seductive a partner? Ought to have known that others would be fascinated like myself; and that once possessed of this treasure, I must guard it night and day?—Yet in that very task of guardianship, I must waste more energy and strength, than would suffice for a brilliant reputation! Who, *who* would be the husband of a beauty?"

CHAPTER IV.

We have already said that the revolution of July, deprived the Baron de Livernais of office; and that it was to fill the void in his existence, he had seriously devoted himself to the career of a man of gallantry; heedless of the anachronism he was committing in returning, in these phlegmatic times, to the frivolous conceits of a former age.

In his new career, he could boast, indeed, of occasional triumphs; but the rebuff received at the hands of the indignant Lady Osborne, had somewhat obscured their glory. The fair daughter of Albion had so completely bid defiance to the daring prowess of the beau of forty-six, that not to forfeit his redoutable

reputation as a lady-killer, he felt that he must silence, by some miraculous achievement, the sarcasms of society.

The first object of a general, compelled to raise a siege, is to repair, by a new success, the injury to his fame. The Baron, therefore, after his defeat, sought out a woman of such unquestionable merit that the fact of pleasing her must afford an incontestable triumph. Having vacillated some time between divers luminaries of beauty, wit, and virtue, his hesitation ceased on beholding Madame Colonge. Struck by the sensation produced by the artist's wife on her first appearance in the world, Monsieur de Livernais imagined that she would be a fitting capital to crown the column of his victories; and forthwith hastened to the accomplishment of this monumental conquest.

Experience constitutes the secret of success of many a middle aged beau. The superior dexterity with which they address themselves to the foibles of the sex, is an

advantage before which the impetuosity of youth hides its diminished head.

The Baron possessed this incomparable science; and like the spider, was accustomed to increase his web, mesh by mesh. On the present occasion, he felt bound to surpass himself and exerted to the utmost his powers of imagination. Permitting the swarm of vulgar admirers who, as soon as they hail the flower of a new and unknown beauty, fly forwards to compete for its perfumes, to buzz around Aurélie, he remained patiently contemplating the conquest, which was to add new lustre to his heroism.

There had existed only a common acquaintanceship betwixt Colonge and Livernais. The artist and the man of the world shook hands when they met in the street, and exchanged a word in the same room; but their intimacy went no further. By a series of progressive management, at which the most cautious could take no exception, his unfrequent visits

became gradually metamorphosed into daily intercourse. Pretending an enthusiastic admiration for the arts, he established himself in the studio of Colonge, who reserved only the secret of his picture of the Cimbri from the Baron; and acquired by degrees the privileges dear to the friends and colleagues of an artist. He who till now had professed the fastidiousness of a man of the boudoir, and abstained from smoking, had his pipe suspended in the studio; a familiarity equivalent, among artists, to a knife and fork at the table of the rich.

Having ingratiated himself with the husband, and as he thought sufficiently blinded his observation, Monsieur de Livernais proceeded to his principal point of attack; and began his lines of circumvallation around the woman on whose heart he trusted to make an impression.

In this new project, he was doomed to meet formidable competitors, such as would have cooled the courage of one less confident in the

irresistibility of his personal merits. Far from being disheartened by the unusual number of rivals through whom he was to force his way, if not remain in the rear, the Baron came, as regarded them, to a most heroic determination.

"Had I only the husband to supplant," thought he, "I need give myself little trouble. But should the pre-occupation of Colonge end with disgusting his wife, there are at least ten pretenders waiting for the prize. If I succeed in estranging her heart from domestic life, it will not suit me to form a catspaw for the chestnuts, in favour of another. I shall, therefore, begin by dismissing my rivals. Such is the logical order in which my victims must be immolated."

Just as the Baron had resolved upon the extermination of his competitors, an unforeseen incident tended to serve his profoundly conceived projects.

We have already dwelt upon the misgivings

of the artist; it is time to develope the analogous feeling which arose in the heart of Aurélie. Women in general approve the efforts of industry, when they present themselves under the form of fortune and glory; but mere industry has no charm for them. They love the texture of the cashmere—the flashing facets of the diamond;—but the loom which constructs the magic flowers of the one, and the tools which produce the fire of the other, would shock the exquisite delicacy of their feelings. If by chance they condescend to allow that they who would succeed must also have the means, they require in such means, an elegance and refinement, seldom possessed by those to whom they are indebted for their efforts. Hadyn composing his symphonies in full court dress—Buffon assuming his lace ruffles before he took up his pen, have few imitators among authors or artists, who are for the most part, people of slovenly habits. Colonge was not exempt from the usual

freedom of costume, common amongst his colleagues. His dress, when painting, consisted of a blouse covered with spots of oil. This negligence was mortifying to Aurélie, who like a true Parisian, had always supposed that to paint successfully, as well as write cleverly, dandyism was an essential characteristic.

Till now, the grievances of the young wife were unimportant; and she had become accustomed to that absence of etiquette, which at first so much offended her. But she was beginning to discover graver causes for dissatisfaction. Finding Colonge shut himself for days together in his studio, she by degrees conceived an aversion to this assiduous and mysterious occupation, of which she began to mistrust the origin. From such unceasing perseverance, she inferred that his ambition might get the better of his affections. She did not enter into the noble and profound feelings, which urged the artist on to glory, so as to render him, a partner worthy of her. Attributing the

laborious efforts of her husband to an inordinate thirst for fame, she grew sick at heart under the influence of supposed neglect.

"He prefers his paintings to his wife!" faltered she, on the artist sending to her one day to beg she would not wait dinner.

From that moment, she became the prey of misgivings less justifiable than those which had caused such anxiety to her husband. But they were quite as poignant; for the tortures of the imagination are often more painful to endure than the bitterness of real woe. Jealous of the anticipated glory of Colonge, she experienced against that strange and intangible rival, all the hatred that might have been inspired by a living woman. The painting of the Cimbri, which, in spite of her entreaties, she had not seen, became a nightmare, of which the very idea was a source of jealousy and despair.

The artist had now to counteract the ingenious stratagems resorted to by his wife, to

allure him from his seclusion in his studio. But he courageously resisted her attempts; till Aurélie, at last hopeless, refrained from further efforts; and affecting indifference, rushed into the vortex of fashionable life, in the hope of thwarting her husband.

We have already shown how completely she succeeded. His wits ever on the alert, Monsieur de Livernais detected the jealousy of the artist, and the anxiety of his wife. Both feelings appeared favourable to his project, and he thenceforth based his plans upon this double point. Without loss of time, he established himself, armed at all points, near both husband and wife; and by Machiavelism almost diabolical, insinuated himself into their mutual confidence.

"What depresses you?" said he affectionately to Colonge, on finding him one morning more dejected than usual.

"I am thinking of my accursed painting!" replied the artist, trying to smile. "Day after day, I become less pleased with it."

"You would deceive me," replied the Baron, knowingly; "and might succeed, were I less your friend. No! it is not the painting that worries you. Shall I tell you of what you are thinking?"

"Pray do!" said Colonge, coldly.

"You are thinking of Monsieur Mariendorf, who, at the Opera last night, remained during two acts in the box of Madame Colonge. I fear you find these Russian diplomatists rather importunate?"

Colonge looked eagerly at the Baron.

"You fancy me jealous then?" said he.

"I do!" replied Monsieur de Livernais. You see I am more frank than yourself. I have been jealous too; and had I a wife as handsome as yours, I should vainly try to suppress the feeling. I deeply sympathize in your position, and though you evince but little confidence in me, am inclined to render you a service."

"What service?"

"Rid you of the amiable Muscovite!"

The painter paused for a moment.

"I will not deny," said he, at last, "that I should be glad to see no more of him."

Monsieur de Livernais required no further authority, but instantly commenced his Russian campaign; and more fortunate than Napoleon, came out of it victorious. Ten days had hardly elapsed, before Mariendorf discontinued his visits to Madame Colonge.

"The Kalmuc is furious!" said the Baron to the artist. "But there is also a fiery Castilian, Don Antonio de Puentes y Cabra, whom I should not be sorry to mow down."

"Cut away!" replied Colonge.

"I have noticed with disgust his assiduities to the wife of my friend."

The Spaniard made three days longer resistance than the Russian, but finally withdrew from the skilful attack of the Baron; who, upon the painter inquiring by what conjuration he had obtained such prompt results, merely replied—"That, my dear fellow, is in-

deed, a profound mystery. But provided you reap the fruits of my cabalistic science, no matter by what means I succeed."

The Baron was now regularly installed in the duties of his singular office, as head of the matrimonial police, in accordance with the views and wishes of the painter; and soon found that his vocation was anything but a sinecure. From the discomfiture of Don Antonio de Puentes y Cabra, till the day he undertook to defeat the projects of Monsieur La Berthonie and the poet Felicien Regnier, the guardian of Madame Colonge had, according to his own expression, "mowed down" five of his official rivals.

But while affecting to act purely in the interests of his friend, he was engaged in furthering his own particular ends. As double faced as most adventurers in gallantry, while on the one hand he presented a countenance teeming with friendship and sincerity, that which he exhibited to Aurélie was no less the

result of calculation and artifice. Assiduous, insinuating, discreet, invariably obsequious and compliant, skilful in provoking unlimited confidence, the Baron omitted nothing by which to cultivate the intimacy of the young wife.

To a certain degree, he had succeeded in obtaining her confidence. Madame Colonge admitted to him the jealousy from the anguish of which she had so long suffered; and though the Baron needed not such an admission, he listened to it with inimitable professions of interest. Rather than seize the opportunity to disparage Colonge, as some less experienced man might have done, he warmly defended him; for once urged by the spirit of contradiction, a woman will accuse even the husband she loves.

"Believe me, Madam, you wrong him," said the Baron, with friendly zeal; "what you attribute to Colonge is the mere consequence of his position. Such is the case with all men of genius:—their works before every

thing! In them, ideas take up so wide a space as to exclude the feelings which manifest themselves when the strain of genius is mute, like weeds that force their way betwixt the flags of an abandoned yard. This despotic control of the brain over the heart, is grievous, I confess; but how can it be otherwise? Would you stifle the ambition of an artist? Would you paralyze the cause to which he imagines himself destined? Can you require that he should shiver the pencil at your feet which is to procure him an immortal name? One might as well demand from an eagle the pathos of the dove! Such a pretension is unjust. Besides, Colonge would not submit to it. You must, therefore, resign yourself to be second in the affections of your husband! To you I can imagine that the idea of my favoured rival must appear strange and vexatious. But remember, your rival is glory, to which Beauty itself may yield precedence without humiliation."

These words, pronounced in a mellifluous

voice so far from assuaging the anguish of Aurélie, served to augment the tortures of her heart.

"And this is all his best friends can offer in justification of his neglect!" thought the young wife, with renewed vexation. "Because he is a man of talent, he is privileged to forget me! Better have allied myself with a commoner order of mind; for then, perhaps, I should have been loved and cherished."

Such was the position of the three principal personages of this story, on the day following the ball of Madame de Gabriel, to which an unforeseen incident, on that very day, served to furnish a more rapid and interesting development.

ER V.

It was two i ernoon, and though returned late fro. all, Colonge had been at work since an early hour, locked up in his studio. Aurélie, less active than her husband, had just quitted her bed-chamber; and was sitting alone in her drawing-room, turning over the leaves of a new novel and continuing that sleepless dream to which we have before referred.

A new feeling, still more poignant and bitter, had combined with the rest. Less proficient than the Baron de Livernais, Monsieur La Berthonie had been guilty at the ball of attributing injuries to the husband, such as he pretended might justify retaliation on the

part of the wife. Urged by specious questions which the ingenuousness of her interrogator seemed to deprive of indecorum, Madame Colonge had been led by degrees to revert to the theme of her usual meditations. After repelling at first the malicious insinuations directed against her husband, she rather confirmed them at last, by expatiating herself, upon the excessive zeal with which, for two months past, he had devoted himself to his work. Berthonie listened to the words of the injured woman with a feigned look of incredulity.

"Fifteen hours a day?" exclaimed he. "Colonge paint fifteen hours a day? Never will I believe it! The most indefatigable artist could not resist such fatigue; and among the qualities of your husband, his love of his art is not, I suspect, the most potent."

"It is nevertheless certain that he passes whole days in his studio," replied Aurélie.

"*You* may believe he does, Madam, but with me, only seeing is believing."

"Do you doubt my word—or his?"—

"If I do not bow to your single assertion, it is because I believe in public report. You assert that of which you are not certain. It is said that, for some time past, you have submitted, in the most exemplary manner, to an unprecedented instance of marital despotism, and that you have not dared to penetrate his studio. If this be true, I shall esteem it truly edifying that the miraculous work of Colonge is an article of faith for you. But pray be tolerant with my involuntary incredulity. Allow me to admire your confidence in respectful silence."

Aurélie, too proud to continue a similar discussion, instead of answering Monsieur La Berthonie, looked grave, and changed the conversation. But his perfidious manœuvre, soon produced its fruits; for nothing can equal the

rapidity with which suspicions are conceived in a character predisposed to jealousy.

Till now, Madame Colonge, in spite of her vexation, had retained the most absolute confidence in her husband. She accused him, it is true, of egotism, on finding herself neglected for his art and desire of fame; but it was impossible for her to think herself betrayed. This idea, however, now presented itself for the first time to her mind; and her heart smarted as if pierced by a dagger.

"Monsieur La Berthonie is perhaps right!" thought she suddenly. "How can I tell that Colonge passes all this time in his studio? Would he lock himself up, if he had nothing to conceal? And when I suppose him locked up, can I be sure that he is even in the house?"

Jealousy resembles the steed of Mazeppa. No sooner is the victim lashed to its foaming sides, than it bears him off to the most arid steppes of the imagination, and leaves him to the beak of the vulture. Aurélie rushed rapidly

through a wilderness of tortures. From suspicion to conviction, she made but a single step. Her husband had deceived her. Doubt was no longer possible. His continual preoccupation, his mysterious seclusion, his incredible efforts, in a word, all the details of his strange conduct, already the source of such acute anguish, were explained!

"At this very instant, perhaps, he is not in his studio," thought Aurélie. "I will ascertain!" cried she, abruptly rising. "I can no longer live in this incertitude!"

She was about to leave the room, but quickly changed her mind. After the instigations of jealousy, came those of pride. Disdaining to resort to espionage, Madame Colonge remained some time absorbed in pensive meditation. On hearing the door open, she started up.

"The Baron de Livernais!" announced the servant in waiting; who vanished, as soon as he had made way for the Adonis of forty-six.

The Baron advanced towards Aurélie with his habitual courtesy; but perceiving the clouded brow of the lovely woman, became grave, and assumed a look of sympathy.

"You are ill, Madam. I am sure that something has vexed you," said he. "Your beauty seldom suffers from the effects of a ball; so that the change in your countenance must proceed from some latent cause."

The jealousies to which women are subject, usually recoils upon their nearest friend. Too proud to clear up her doubts herself, Aurélie determined to accept the aid of another; and selected Monsieur de Livernais, whose acquiescence she had already put to the test.

"I see you wish to make me believe that, in the course of the night, I am become frightful," said she, trying to smile. "To punish you for so strange a supposition, I feel inclined to tax your good offices."

"Speak, Madam! I am completely at your orders."

"You are not mistaken. Something weighs upon my mind, but not so serious as you suppose;—a caprice, a mere nothing! You are aware of my rigorous exclusion from my husband's studio. For some time, I have obediently submitted; but I now feel a strong inclination to taste the forbidden fruit. If I but mention it to Colonge, he laughs at me, and tells me that, in less than a month, my curiosity will be gratified. But should he concede this favour to another, to you, for instance, it would be impossible, afterwards, to refuse me."

"You wish me, then, to force the door of your husband's sanctuary? I will take the fortress by assault; but if I perish on the breach, it is by your will and pleasure! Is Colonge now in his studio?"

"Where should he be?" said Aurélie, involuntarily frowning.

"In that case, I will, if you approve, commence operations. Succeed or fail, I will

come and give you a report of my attempt."

"I shall expect you," replied the jealous wife, who, after the departure of the Baron, impatiently counted the minutes of his absence. On quitting her apartment, the Baron rapidly cleared the stories separating the studio from the dwelling-rooms. Having entered the outer room, which during the day was never locked, he knocked several times at the door of the artist's studio, who, impatient of interruption, rushed to half open the door, and stood his ground, as if determined to defend himself.

"My dear Sir," said the Baron, perceiving his threatening position, "enter I must, for I am about to render you a service, and therefore deserve that there should be an exception in my favour. Sooner or later, this mysterious painting must be seen; then why refuse me the pleasure of being the first to admire it?"

"It is not yet worthy of your criticism,"

replied Colonge, with the modesty under which people of talent contrive to conceal their pride. "If you have any thing important to communicate, let us go down to another room."

"No," replied Monsieur de Livernais: "if you are obstinate, remember I am a Breton. I had the conceit yesterday to boast that I had seen your chef-d'œuvre; and see it I must, or submit to the humiliation of being laughed at."

"In a fortnight it will be finished, and then—"

"In a fortnight any one may see it, and I wish for the precedence. You see, my dear Colonge, it is so fixed a purpose in me, that the devil would not stop me! I am resolved, if you do not let me enter the sanctum sanctorum, to leave you to the tender mercies of your conjugal persecutors, and you may rid yourself of La Berthonie and Regnier as best you can."

"Come in then," said the painter, subdued by this argument. "I can no longer refuse."

The Baron stepped up to the painting, brightened by a winter sun, and pausing, stood in the attitude of admiration.

"There are still many parts to retouch," said Colonge, anxiously following the eye of his judge.

On hearing the voice of the artist, the Baron awoke from the stupor of amazement into which he had been plunged; and throwing down his hat, abruptly seized the artist's hands, which he all but crushed in his grasp.

"My dear friend," said he, with a voice tremulous with emotion, "hitherto you have only been a distinguished artist; but you are become a great painter. Beautiful! magnificent! admirable! I am astounded! I certainly expected to see a good picture, but not such a first rate production as this."

"You think well of it, then?" said the

painter, flattered by such fervent testimonials of enthusiasm.

"It will be [illegible] of the exhibition," replied Monsieu[illegible]ernais, with increasing ecstasy. "In [illegible]ure, you unite the genius of Delacroix, [illegible]oetical inspirations of Scheffer, the [illegible]f Delaroche, and the colouring of [illegible] What life! what spirit! what truth! [illegible]se soldiers engage, overthrow and repulse! It is something like a battle! not one of your scenes such as one sees at Franconi's circus. This painting smells of blood!—The wounded cry—the horses neigh!—I hear them! Look at the attitude of Marius!—And the women strangling one another to escape from Roman slavery. How beautiful are they in death! Here, a tragedy—yonder, an elegy! Words fail to express my feelings. One can only end with admirable! sublime!"

The biblical figure of a camel passing through the eye of a needle was never better exem-

plified than in the influence of flattery: which, however coarse and undisguised, insinuates itself into the most susceptible minds. While protesting against the inordinate eulogiums lavished upon his work, Colonge did not appear to suspect, for a moment, the sincerity of his ecstatic admirer; but followed him, step by step, while the Baron was performing the pantomimic evolutions common to connoisseurs. By turns approaching or receding, he proceeded from right to left, or left to right; examining minutely every detail, not forgetting the most fleecy cloud, or tiniest tuft of grass.

"As I live, there is a hero with whom I claim acquaintance!" said he, pointing out a personage in the critical position of being pressed to death by a Roman soldier. Colonge turned red at the remark. "If I am not mistaken, it is our friend Berthonie!" persisted the Baron, having examined the fallen Cimbrian.

"Pardon the mute revenge of an artist,"

replied Colonge. "The lady-killers who flutter round my wife, pursue me even to my studio. Their idiot faces intrude even on my canvas; and I often find them at the point of my brush, against my very will."

"There is something of Dante and Michael Angelo in your retribution," exclaimed the Baron, with admiration.

"Unfortunately," resumed the artist, "I have neither hell nor purgatory to inflict upon my foes; and unable to make fiends of them, I make victims. The fellow running away yonder, is Roquancourt; the other falling from his horse, is Mariendorf; the third on his knees imploring mercy, is Don Antonio de Puentes y Cabra; and there lies, half dead, the melancholy youth, Felicien Regnier!"

"What a striking likeness!—Dantan has done nothing better."

"The vengeance in which I have indulged at the expense of these gentlemen, has made me hazard an idea of which the success is

doubtful—the introduction of the grotesque into a serious subject."

"An admirable conception! you apply to painting, the system of Victor Hugo in composition. I suspect the innovation will obtain a success absolutely transcendant; the only reproach I can make you, is that you have omitted your friends, whom you should have pourtrayed as victorious Romans. The idea would have been perfect. I should have been enchanted to be handed down to posterity, as a simple soldier in the triumphant ranks of Marius."

"Your profile is indeed Roman," replied Colonge looking steadfastly at his treacherous friend. "Yonder is the head of a centurion, which does not please me. If you like, I will substitute yours."

"You are too good!" said the Baron, who with difficulty controlled his inclination to laugh at the good-natured simplicity of the

artist. But a minute afterwards, the Baron's eyes became riveted upon a group of women in the foreground of the picture.

"Better and better!" cried he. "Here is another face of my acquaintance. That delectable creature, who is strangling herself with such graceful despair, is Madame — Madame—a German! help me, Colonge!"

"Madame de Grafhen," said Colonge.

"Exactly! Is it as friend or foe, she figures in the scene?"

"As neither the one or the other; but because she happens to be exquisitely fair; as rare a treasure in Paris, as her Teutonic face. You must perceive that the figure in question is in the fullest light, which has compelled me to be particular. You can scarcely imagine the difficulty of that head, I had painted it out at least three times; when I found myself one night at the Opera, next to the box of Madame de Grafhen, who as you know, has a

purely Germanic countenance! *There* is the head I want, thought I. Painted as if it was from memory, what think you of the likeness?"

"Most striking!" replied the Baron, looking at the portrait of the Teutonic beauty; "your picture is in all respects perfection!" Then, after expressing himself highly grateful for the favour he had received; "I will not intrude further upon your valuable time," said he. "Adieu; as I go down, I will present my respects to Madame Colonge."

"Is not to-morrow the steeple-chase at Berny?" inquired the artist.

"Yes! and on my return, I will give you all the particulars."

"You remember your promise respecting little Regnier and my trusty friend La Berthonie?"

"Of course I do! They shall share the fate of their seven predecessors."

Monsieur de Livernais now grasped the artist's hand, with hypocritical cordiality; but

had no sooner quitted the studio, than his face betrayed the contempt he had so long suppressed.

"So! Your wife is dark, and you amuse yourself, forsooth, by painting beauties as fair as day-light," thought he. "Fortunately, this Teutonic dame is a beauty, and Aurélie is already disposed to be jealous. I have now means of enraging her against him; and angry women are easily managed. Bravo! I hold a flush of kings! But I will not lay down my cards, till I have got rid of Berthonie and Regnier. Thank heaven, that will be speedily done; and I may then render myself agreeable in their place."

Ere he entered the salon of Madame Colonge, the Baron assumed a becoming air of gravity and reserve.

"Well?" said the young wife impatiently, "was he in the studio?"

"He was, Madam," replied the Baron gravely, and Aurélie relieved of all doubt, breathed a sigh of satisfaction.

" He allowed you then to go in, and you saw the mysterious picture. What think you —is it worth the time he devotes to it?"

" Allow me to answer that question to-morrow."

" Why so?" exclaimed she eagerly.

" I require four and twenty hours, to clear up a point, which, if my suspicions prove founded, is important. To-morrow, on my return from the steeple chase, your curiosity shall be gratified."

The assumed gravity of the Baron roused the suspicions of Aurélie.

" Why not explain yourself directly?" said she, anxiously, unable to remain composed.

" Impossible! to-morrow you shall know all."

After a meditative pause, Madame Colonge observed, " to-morrow then, or never!"

" To-morrow for certain," replied the Baron, highly elated. " If she be so anxious without even an object," mused the traitor, " how will

it be when I prove that Colonge is in love with Madame de Grafhen?"

After this Machiavelic reflection, the beau of forty-six took the jealous wife, and quitted the room g in the prospect of a triumph.

CHAPTER VI.

THE following day, at about five o'clock, an elegant equipage was seen returning through the southern entrance of Paris; in which sat Madame Colonge by the side of Madame de Gabriel. In the back, sat Monsieur La Berthonie and the pensive poet, Felicien Regnier; close to the carriage, rode Monsieur de Livernais, followed by his servant. The countenances of these individuals offered the most extraordinary contrasts.

With an air of triumph and self-sufficiency, the Baron seemed to prance on his horse as majestically as Louis XIV in the square of the Place des Victoires. Aurélie was thoughtful and silent; while her more lively neighbour

manifested the playful vivacity peculiar to ladies of uncertain age, to whom their last glance at the looking-glass has been satisfactory. By turns gay and languishing, passing "from grave to gay, from pleasing to severe," she smiled, sighed, and would perhaps have blushed, could art have accomplished the miracle.

By the force of glances resembling the rolling fire of well-drilled infantry, Madame de Gabriel riddled the unhappy poet opposite; who unconsciously submitted to be victimized. To Regnier, the conduct of the two women was wholly inexplicable. Notwithstanding the presumptuous epistle he had slipped into her handkerchief, the conduct of Aurélie towards him was unchanged. He had anticipated the most electrifying results; and would evidently have preferred indications of resentment to such mortifying indifference. On the other hand, in spite of his vanity, he could not understand the provoking coquetry of Madame de Gabriel, to whom he had never dedicated what

he elegiacally called the sighs of his soul. "Are they laughing at me?" thought he, his eyes directing from the Viscountess to the artist's wife those intense and mysterious looks with which pale romantic young gentlemen are apt to qualify their vapid faces. Seated beside the poet, Monsieur La Berthonie, usually so brilliant, seemed as much lost in thought as the poet himself. A dandy would have attributed his air of discomfiture to the bespattered condition of his coat. But number nine of Madame Colonge's admirers, was superior to the irritation caused by a splash or two of mud; and the disastrous state of his outward man had but little to do with his clouded brow, and a silence as absolute as that of Madame Colonge.

As they entered Paris, Madame de Gabriel, after fluttering from twig to twig of the various branches of conversation, perched at last upon that of Italian literature.

"I was lately reading a translation of Pe-

trarch," said she, addressing a look of intelligence to Felicien Regnier, "and mean to resume my studies in Italian. Poetry loses much by translation. Do you like Petrarch, Monsieur Regnier?"

"After Dante, he is my favourite poet," replied the pallid youth.

"Dante, divine Dante! what genius," observed the Viscountess, raising her eyes languidly to heaven. "I lately saw a bust of him, with which I shall present myself."

"To such men, statues should indeed be raised!" replied Regnier, with prodigious emphasis.

"But, tell me," rejoined Madame de Gabriel, in a mellifluous voice, "do you really think that in the hearts of these divine poets, love occupies as much place as their works seem to indicate? I need not remind you, that sensibility is not the failing of superior minds—Lord Byron for instance!"

"In that point of view, I abandon Byron to

you—in all other respects my master! But as to the pure passion of Dante and Petrarch, there cannot be a shadow of doubt:—Laura and Beatrix to wit, the two brightest stars of poetry, without whom the glories of their lovers would seem incomplete. Genius without tenderness, would be a year without spring."

In pronouncing these words, which were repeated verbatim from his letter, the poet stole a glance at Aurélie, who with downcast eyes remained lost in meditation.

"Laura and Beatrix!" repeated Madame de Gabriel. "Alas! in those names there exists a perfume which women do well not to inhale too long. Still, if weakness were ever excusable, must it not be when purified, ennobled, and etherialised, by the poet's soul! How beautiful and seductive the image of the rose blooming on the laurel of beauty, immortalized by genius."

Felicien Regnier bounded from his seat; the last phrase of the Countess being extracted

word for word from the letter he had concealed in the folds of Madame Colonge's handkerchief. In utter bewilderment, he gazed upon the mature beauty who had rendered him quotation for quotation, almost resigned to the immortal honours his genius had called forth; till Madame de Gabriel, unable to endure his wild and penetrating glance, at length hung down her head, and gave a sigh such as is breathed by women striving to repress some powerful emotion.

"Mystery upon mystery!" thought the romantic poet. "The rose blooming upon the laurel is certainly mine, and not one of those trite ideas which present themselves to vulgar minds. There is a mystery in all this!"

The carriage arriving at the barrier, one of the officers went through the usual ceremony of opening the carriage for the *octroi*, which aroused Monsieur La Berthonie from his stupor.

"There are hackney coaches here," said he,

addressing himself to Madame de Gabriel. "I shall get into one; for I cannot think of your being seen in the streets of Paris with one so little presentable as I am."

"I will not hear of it," replied the Viscountess; "it is almost dark, and no one can see you."

In spite of the urbanity of these words, Madame de Gabriel earnestly desired to get rid of the fat man, splashed from head to foot, whose contact was productive of such disastrous consequences to the blue silk lining of her carriage. Monsieur La Berthonie, therefore, got out, and in passing before Felicien Regnier, whispered to him, "Come with me, I wish to speak with you!"

For some time, the sallow poet had been embarrassed by the incomprehensible allusions of the quadragenarian Viscountess, while Madame Colonge seemed unaware of his presence. Finding, therefore, that his object was not the least advanced by remaining, he acqui-

esced in the proposition of his friend, and left the carriage.

"What! You desert us too?" said Madame de Gabriel, with an air of surprise.

"I reside in the same direction as Monsieur La Berthonie," said the poet, vainly seeking a favourable look from Aurélie.

"Remember that you promised to come and read me your poem," replied the Viscountess. "I am dying for your 'Mists and Dews.'"

"A nice flower for the dew, truly!" thought the poet, following his companion; "she is old enough to be my mother!"

Before the two men had settled themselves in the coach, Monsieur de Livernais dismounted; and coming up to the carriage of Madame de Gabriel, and affecting an air of familiarity, stepped into it. This only served to increase the irritation of La Berthonie; who, grumbling betwixt his teeth, observed,

"Laugh, my friend, if you will! But tomorrow, it will be our turn."

"What have you to say to me," said the poet, as the coach rolled off.

"Nothing important. But I thought I should do you a service in withdrawing you from the fire of Madame de Gabriel. What a storm of red hot shot did she aim at you! If your heart be not a cullender, your epidermis must be bullet proof!"

"I thought you asleep."

"With one eye only. Do you know you are a dangerous man! Lovelace was nothing to you."

"I do not comprehend you," said the poet, caressing his leonine mane.

"Hear me!" said Monsieur La Berthonie, in a friendly tone. "Be sincere with me, and I will be equally so with you, which will be an advantage to both. That you may not persist in dissembling, accept a specimen of my sincerity. A few days ago, I greatly displeased you by my assiduities towards Madame Colonge."

"How so?" inquired indiscreetly Regnier.

"Allow me to finish. You supposed me to be your rival; and during eight and forty hours, were justified in so thinking. But now, you have no further cause for alarm. I withdraw, and wish you all possible success."

"This is a sudden change," said the poet, with a distrustful air.

"It is true," replied the other, "and yet easy to explain. I am the friend of Colonge, and cannot be guilty of any real treachery towards him."

"And probably your little mischance of today has somewhat prompted this virtuous determination!"

"You see then," said the fat man, "that between you and me, there can be no further cause for dispute."

"There never was. You fancied me attached to Madame Colonge."

"Nonsense, my dear fellow! I know some-

thing you cannot deny, which may prove the absurdity of your reserve."

"What reserve?" inquired Regnier, whose curiosity was highly excited.

"Did you not, the other day, possess yourself of the handkerchief of the lady in question?"

"The handkerchief of Madame Colonge?" exclaimed the poet, whose extreme agitation, caused his mane to vibrate on the collar of his coat.

"Was it *not* you?" inquired La Berthonie, equally surprised.

"I know not to what you allude!" replied Regnier, in such agitation that the fat man was almost convinced of his mistake.

"If you be not the culprit," said the latter, "I know but one man equal to such impertinence."

"Whom?" inquired the poet, in a hollow voice.

"The man we have just quitted, and who is now laughing at us;—Monsieur de Livernais."

"Most likely; it was for that he called me out of the room to speak to Madame de Gabriel."

"Did you keep the handkerchief?"

"I did! Better still."

"Better still?"

Regnier paused.

"Since you know nearly all, mystery is useless. I secreted a letter in it."

"I thought you wiser. Your letter, my dear Sir, instead of arriving at its address, fell into the hands of Monsieur de Livernais!"

"He shall restore it me, at the point of the sword!" exclaimed the poet.

"It is always wiser to be explicit," said La Berthonie, to whom the indignation of the poet seemed to afford infinite pleasure. "I myself have a difference to settle with Monsieur de Livernais. Between us, we may give him the lesson he deserves."

"But is he too in love with Madame Colonge? They were right in painting Love as blind."

"Yes, he is doubtless your rival."

"Our rival, you mean to say—my name is effaced from the list. I no longer count for one."

"Are you sincere?"

"Upon my honour; and the proof is, I will serve you without reserve. Should the affections of Madame Colonge be really assailable, I should bear with your triumph better than that of the superannuated coxcomb. His duplicity is outrageous. It is shameful to see how, with his professions of friendship, he dupes poor Colonge, who, with the usual ingenuousness of artists, sees no further than his nose. It is a second edition of Tartuffe and Orgon. But let him have a care, for I have something in store for him."

"He will not be more surprised than by the visit I intend to make him to-morrow," said the poet fiercely.

"Before two days are over, he shall be the jest of Paris!"

I shall certainly crop off his ears, if he do not restore to me both the letter and handkerchief."

While the two indignant gentlemen were mutually instigating each other to a signal vengeance on their common enemy, Livernais, the latter was quietly seated in Madame de Gabriel's carriage, laughing at their expense. The Viscountess tacitly encouraged the ridicule of Monsieur La Berthonie; but upon the pale faced poet being made the butt of his sarcasm, she became silent. This change of physiognomy did not escape the quick observation of the Baron, who instantly abstained.

"Good!" thought he. "She has swallowed the bait, and he will be clever if he get rid of her."

Before returning home, she dropped Aurélie, who on getting out of the carriage cast a significant glance at the Baron.

"I must speak to Colonge," said he, "do you think, Madam, I shall find him at home?"

"Most likely;" replied Aurélie, who on bidding adieu to the Viscountess, accepted the arm of Monsieur de Livernais, and proceeded up stairs.

On entering the room, Aurélie, ere she threw off her hat and shawl, abruptly addressed the Baron in a trembling voice, saying, "The twenty-four hours are elapsed! Speak, I beseech you!"

The Baron acquiesced. With a compassionate glance at the young wife, he addressed her in the following terms.

ER VII.

"WHEN I or a delay of twenty-four hours, Madam, aid the Baron, "there existed a doubt, which I have since cleared up; —what was suspicion, is now certainty. My anxiety, far from diminishing, increases. The subject to which I allude, is of so delicate a nature, that I would fain crave permission to be silent."

"Explain yourself, I entreat," interrupted Madame Colonge, in great anxiety.

"*You* know whether I am your husband's friend!" replied Monsieur de Livernais. "You have ever found me prompt in his defence, and even to-day, I do not despair of justification."

"What has he done?" exclaimed Aurélie. "Do you not see that I am in tortures?"

"Allow me to fulfil the duty dictated by my sincere friendship for Colonge. Were he a man of ordinary standing, I would not waste my time; but your husband is a distinguished painter, a man of eminent talents. To judge *him*, one must place oneself in his position. What is the predominating faculty of artists? —Imagination—which is of a restless and wandering nature, and would expire in the midst of peace and happiness; eschewing the most prosperous destiny, to stray into regions unknown. Suppose, for instance, that inestimable treasure, an all perfect woman!—Suppose, Madam, all you are yourself!—Even the incomparable treasure—even a perfect woman, would fail in attaching a man carried away by every gust of the imagination. What will be the result. Though nothing about you should change, though you might still be

loved, in the circles frequented by your husband, previous to his marriage, where you never go, there may exist a woman less beautiful than yourself, but possessed of other attractions."

"A woman?" exclaimed Aurélie.

"A woman, in whom," treacherously resumed the Baron, "may be united the contrasts required by the caprices of our sex. *Your* hair is dark; her's may be fair; your eyes are brown, her's may be blue; and in place of your exquisite paleness, she may display the vulgar bloom of early youth. Between you and this woman, there can be no comparison. Nevertheless, so fanciful is human nature, that the fervent imagination of the artist will abandon the worship of what is perfect, to adore that which is inferior; the disadvantage being compensated by the charm of novelty."

"Explain yourself more clearly," said

Aurélie. "In one word, of whom are you speaking? Who is the woman, you thus minutely describe?"

"I doubt whether you are acquainted with her—"

"Her name!"

"Her name, is Madame de Grafhen!" said the Baron, faintly, as if unwilling to offer too *sudden* a shock to the jealous woman.

"Madame de Grafhen?" repeated Aurélie, her eyes flashing fire. "Alas! she is indeed beautiful, far more more so than I am! He loves her then? You do well to warn me. But assertion does not suffice. I must have proofs."

"You will find them in the studio of Colonge."

"In the studio?"

"In the picture, on which he is at this moment occupied."

"Her portrait?" inquired the young woman, trembling.

"Her portrait!" replied Monsieur de Liver-

nais. "This is what I was desired to conceal from you. But of what avail would have been my discretion? You *must* see this picture, sooner or later. Was it not better to prepare you for the mortification which necessarily awaits you?"

"You are sure it is the portrait of that woman?"

"Yesterday I doubted, and went purposely to the Opera to see her. She was in her box, and I admit that the resemblance is wonderful. It is nothing new for an artist to paint the object of his affections," continued the Baron. "But in this painting, intended for the public gaze, thus to publish his passion for a married woman being himself married can only be accounted for by an idolatry bordering upon madness.—Colonge must have lost his senses, which ought to secure your forbearance; for in cool blood, he would never have outraged you thus."

Monsieur de Livernais watched the effect of these words; to which Aurélie, with colourless

and quivering lips, listened with the awe-struck countenance of a culprit hearing his sentence of death.

"I have afflicted you sorely," said he, with hypocritical suavity of voice. "Oh that I could have spared you such anguish! You *would* know the truth, and I told it, at the risk of giving you pain."

"I am indeed sick at heart," replied the horror-struck woman.

"Take courage, Madam! Do not give way! It is a mere momentary error on the part of Colonge. He will soon feel his wrongs, and sue for forgiveness at your feet. Your grief is doubtless natural, but will avail you nothing in this ill-deserved affliction. My words surprise you, I perceive. Young, beautiful, uniting all that can attract or charm, you do not understand that the happiness of being yours, can excuse anything. But remember that men of genius, artists above all, must not be judged by any ordinary criterion. They are wandering

stars which no human power can arrest in their course. Sick of present felicity, their imagination requires the strange, the distant, the unknown. In Colonge's place, any one else would have devoted himself to please you and become worthy of you by an undivided adoration. I speak only after my own heart. Any other would have loved you as you deserve to be loved, fervently, solely, eternally. If he have not done so, it is that the power of feeling such devotion, such abnegation, is incompatible with the ambition, more or less selfish, which serves as the stimulus of genius. Independent of the existence Colonge shares with you, which should afford him sufficient happiness, he has another destiny to accomplish, for himself alone; thus abstracting from you a part of his existence, while you surrender yours to him, entirely. You have, alas! only to conform to the imperious laws peculiar to his vocation. You must not judge him too severely, since his errors are the inevitable re-

sult of his position. Every tree must bear its fruit. To exact fidelity of a man of talent, would be, as Madame de Gabriel says, to seek roses on the laurel."

Monsieur de Livernais persisted some time longer in criminating the character of the painter, while pretending to suggest excuses for his supposed infidelity. In listening to the perfidious reasoning of the Baron, Aurélie, far from feeling her anguish subside, suffered only more acutely.

"So then!" said she, "I am become nothing in his existence! To have possessed his heart a year, perhaps, is more than I had the right to expect. If he betray me, it is not his fault, but mine. Doubtless he retains some sort of affection for me; but I can no longer captivate his imagination, and it is, therefore, just he should seek in another the charm that fails in me! Such are the consolations offered to me!"

Those who would reap must sow. Such was the creed of the wily Baron.

"I have prepared my way," thought he; "which must suffice for the present. I must wait a few days, for the declaration of my attachment."

Resolved not to mar his success by precipitation, he took leave of Aurélie; who, in her perturbation of mind, was scarcely aware of his departure. Suddenly, the jealous woman recovered from her stupor.

"It is impossible!" cried she; "I must see this to believe it."

Rushing out of the room, she proceeded towards the studio; but on her way, was met by her husband, who had quitted his palette upon hearing that she was returned. She was, therefore, obliged to renounce her intention. Several visits in the evening, interfered with her project; but next day, heart broken by the vain effort of subduing her fears, she sent for her husband who, as was his custom, had been painting since early morning.

"I regret to disturb you," said she, assum-

ing a calm and conciliatory air, such as women can display even in their most poignant sufferings. "I must beg you to dress, and proceed to Madame de Gabriel's."

"To Madame de Gabriel's?" replied the astonished artist.

"Yesterday, I promised to drive out with her; but I feel unwell, and cannot go out. I wish you to go to her, that she may not be kept waiting."

"Can you not write to her?"

"She will think me lazy and be angry. But if you go yourself, she will believe you, and you owe her ten visits at least."

"What is the use of putting me to all this inconvenience?" said the painter, unwilling to be disturbed for so unnecessary a purpose.

"Inconvenience? a visit to a charming woman?" replied Aurélie, with a forced smile; "Be more gallant! Go and dress yourself, and away."

"As it is your wish, I go," said Colonge, "I only trust I may not find her at home."

Aurélie watched his departure from a window, opening towards the street; and before the cabriolet was out of sight, hastened to the studio. In the outer room, she met Colonge's servant, the only person privileged to enter the sanctuary, who was just then trying to give a more orderly air to the scattered collection of busts, arms, and casts, strewed about the room. On seeing his mistress approach, he remained motionless with a partizan in one hand and an arquebuse in the other.

"Open that door!" said Aurélie, pointing to the entrance of the studio.

The servant hesitated.

"I would willingly obey you, Madam," replied he, "but the orders of my master—"

"Open that door!" repeated Aurélie, imperatively.

Between the contradictory orders of a husband and wife, an intelligent servant never hesitates; he must obey the wife, to save the husband from reproof. The artist's valet-de-chambre conformed strictly to this rule of

policy. Laying down the weapons, he opened the door of the mysterious sanctuary, and carefully closed it as Aurélie entered.

"Should my master return, he will not eat me, I suppose," said he; and continued to repair the chaotic disorder of the room. About to ascertain the truth of the accusation against her husband, Madame Colonge paused from intense agitation; her knees gave way and her heart beat with such violence, that she was forced to press it with her hand to subdue its pulsations, as she advanced towards the painting. Among the figures crowded on the canvass, one alone seemed to court her eye. As the eagle singles with a glance its victim from the flock, did the eyes dark of Aurélie fix themselves upon the youthful and expressive face of her she thought her rival. On recognizing Madame de Grafhen, her blood seemed frozen in her veins; and thus petrified, she supported herself mechanically against a chair. By degrees, she recovered; and the jealous wife

stood motionless before the picture, contemplating the azure eyes, fair hair, graceful features, of a being formed for adoration.

Enchanted with this magnificent head, Colonge had lavished on it the whole resources of his genius; bestowing upon every detail, the most minute and studied care. It was the gem of his picture, to the polishing of which, he had dedicated days and nights. In his rare moments of self-confidence, in the golden hour of hope, when, giving way to the secret ambition of his soul, he conversed with futurity, he had sometimes murmured to himself, "This head alone will immortalize me!"

Maddened by jealousy, with the spring of a leopard rushing on its prey, Aurélie now seized the palette, and substituted a black patch for the portrait of Madame de Grafhen.

"Let him come!" cried she, regarding with wild triumph her work of ruin! At that moment, her husband's voice was heard without.

"It is he!" exclaimed Aurélie, with rage and indignation.

But before the painter opened the door, Madame Colonge had concealed herself behind a curtain, which masked the extremity of the studio.

CHAPTER VIII.

On returning to Madame de Gabriel's, Colonge proceeded to the apartment of his wife, to acquaint her with the accomplishment of his mission, and not finding her, thought she must be gone out, and mutely cursing the endless caprice of womankind in matters of health, proceeded towards his studio. As was his custom, he crossed the ante-room without stopping, and carefully closing the studio door, stood before his picture, from which he had only been an hour absent. The horrible mask applied to the face of his lovely heroine, made him start back with horror. He fancied himself the dupe of some fiendish hallucination,

and doubting the evidence of his eyes, stood transfixed before his work.

"Louis!" shouted he, forgetting that he had locked himself into the room. Instead of answering, the man crept down stairs, saying,

"I was sure he would storm! But as my mistress is still there, let them settle it together!"

The demure decorum of the age does not admit of those deadly hatreds and ardent jealousies which, in the poetical times of the middle ages, often prompted the artist to exchange the pencil for the sword. Now-a-days, more ink than blood is spilt in such affairs.

There is more criticism, and less fighting; and the ferocious measures resorted to by the competitors of the great masters, would revolt their less skilful but more polished successors.

Though Colonge could not boast of the good will of his fellow artists, he had never supposed the possibility of a secret enemy

so envious of his talent as to be capable of gratifying at all hazards, a despicable hatred. For the first time, the painful idea of some secret foe presented itself to his mind.

"A rival only could be guilty of such an infamy!" thought he, contemplating the disaster. "He has, indeed, struck home! My divine, my beautiful figure, a figure which, to be an angel, wanted only wings—to be mutilated and polluted, by the hand of a ruffian!—I will seek him, though concealed in the bowels of the earth. Woe betide him—doubly woe betide him!—His life shall pay for it!"

"Take mine, then!"—exclaimed Aurélie, rushing forward from her concealment.

On beholding his wife, whose eyes, attitude, and voice, announced the ungovernable frenzy of jealousy, Colonge stood confounded.

"Aurélie," faltered he, "*who* has done this?"

"It was I!" said she, in a concentrated voice.

"How had my picture offended you? You have destroyed the work of at least a week!"

"Hear me!" said Aurélie. "You find me here for the last time. On quitting this room, I return to my father. When I am gone, you may paint your divinity at leisure. But till then, I will not endure such insults. To deceive me was enough—to insult me is too much!"

"Insult you?—deceive you? What do you mean?" cried the astonished Colonge.

Madame Colonge looked scornfully at her husband.

"Though I hate you," said she, "do not force me to despise you. Of what avail this deceit? Do I not recognize Madame de Grafhen?"

"You are jealous, then?" exclaimed the painter, all but consoled for the catastrophe. "What folly! what madness! Because one of the figures in my painting resembles her, you

"Many painters possess the same faculty. Devoted to the study of nature, we retain the impression of objects, with greater facility than others."

"That of pretty women especially it appears!"

"If you doubt what I say," replied Colonge with a smile, "it is easy enough to convince yourself."

The painter then took up a pencil, and opening an album, sat down beside a small table.

"What are you going to do?" inquired Aurélie, her curiosity much excited by these preliminaries.

"*Your* portrait from memory. Is not that the subject of our discussion?"

Instead of answering, Aurélie placed herself behind her husband.

"Bravo!" said the artist. "*Now*, I cannot deceive you."

The painter then commenced his difficult

task. He first sketched the pure oval, which characterized Aurélie's face; then, one by one, portrayed the features of her charming countenance. Sometimes he paused, with eyes half closed, contemplating in the bottom of his soul, as in an invisible mirror, some feature difficult to describe. But his hesitation was short; for soon, the magic line, the almost impossible expression, appeared unerringly on the paper. The sketch finished, Colonge retouched every line with fervent solicitude. Already the resemblance was incontestable. He had represented her to the life;—her vivid eyes—her contemplative forehead—the smile of the lips, all beaming with youth and beauty.

"What think you now?"—said the artist, turning towards his wife.

Aurélie, leaning over her husband's shoulder, sought in vain some pretext for criticism.

"You are right!" said she drily. "I can no longer doubt your talent; so that if a face

have the good fortune to please you, it requires little effort to retain the memory of it; and thus you preserve the portraits of all the ladies who have been honoured with your attention!"

"The plain as well as the beautiful," replied Colonge, trying to appease the storm gathering on the brow of Aurélie.

"The plain!—Do you ever look at them?"

"A painter must study all, and every thing. Shall I sketch an ugly woman for you?"

"As you please!" replied Aurélie with affected indifference.

He accordingly resumed his pencil, and making a rapid sketch, handed it to his wife.

"Madame de Gabriel!" said she, half laughing, in spite of herself. "If she only knew how you treat her!"

"You admit then, that it is not love, but memory. Perhaps you think me in love with Madame de Gabriel?"

"Swear to me, on your honour, that you are not in love with Madame de Grafhen?"

"By my honour and my love, I swear!" said the artist, eagerly pressing her hand to his lips.

"If I forgive all the pain you have caused me, will you ever subject me again to such an ordeal?"

"Never!"—replied Colonge, glancing at his injured painting. "It costs me too dear!"

"Among the other figures," said Aurélie, "are there any portraits?"

"Not one," answered the artist, alarmed by the possibility of some fresh disaster.

"There are some faces really beautiful!"

"Mere efforts of imagination. I trust you are not jealous of them. They are purely imaginary."

"You do not know what jealousy is!" faltered Aurélie, almost in tears.

"Are you *sure?*"—

"*You* have too much to think of. A man of sense is superior to such frivolities. While

painting for posterity, how are you to find a moment for jealousy?"

Colonge sighed deeply as he reflected upon the hours of bitter anguish he had endured from the very feeling of which his wife pronounced him incapable.

"You must now be reasonable," said he changing the conversation, "for it will be the fifth time I have begun that figure."

"Do not presume to search your memory then, for a model!" said Aurélie, archly.

"Where am I to find one, then?—Have you not forbidden me to draw from nature?"

"I did not forbid you to draw from *me*."

"*Your* portrait in this painting?"

"Why not?—Am I too ugly?"

"You do not think of such a thing!"

"So much so, that I positively exact it!" replied Aurélie, gravely.

"It does not suit me."

"It suited you to paint Madame de Grafhen."

"But——"

"But it *must* be so. You owe it me, in compensation for all I have suffered. In a word, *my* head, or none!"

"Or *none?*"—said Colonge, contemplating his wife with an air of stupefaction. Aurélie sat down opposite the window.

"Since I am here," said she. "I will immediately give you a sitting.—Am I properly seated?"

Perceiving the inutility of further remonstrance with a woman suffering under the fever of jealousy, and fearing further exasperation, he placed himself before the easel, pretending to work; then examined with a sigh the havoc made in his picture.

"I did not ask for this proof of attachment!" thought he, trying to console himself; "but provided she love me, what signifies the rest?"

While considering how he could repair the damage to his painting, Colonge was struck

with a sudden idea. He remembered Timanthes vainly endeavouring to express the grief of Agamemnon, and replacing by a veil the face he found himself incapable of portraying.

"Why should I not imitate the example?" thought the painter, "why resist an invincible difficulty?—By lengthening the drapery of the aged figure, I arrive at the same result as Timanthes. It is only a head the less. It was beautiful, certainly; but the body remains, which has also some merit. My enemies will assert that I failed in my intentions; but they know not what it is to possess a jealous wife, and a wife one loves."

In certain dilemmas decision cannot be too prompt. Colonge adopted the maxim by putting his newly conceived idea into execution. At the end of half an hour, Aurélie, at whom her husband occasionally looked, as if actually painting her portrait, fatigued with her sedentary position, suddenly rose.

"Let me see it!" said she, looking at the picture; where, instead of her own face, she found the skirt of a blue cloak, placing in the relief the beautiful figure of which he had contrived to conceal the head with the exception of the hair and forehead.

"Is *this* my portrait?"—said she, looking angrily at her husband.

"*Your* portrait?" repeated Colonge. "Do you suppose I would expose, to the gaze of the idle crowd during three months at the Louvre, the features and expression I so dearly love? Rather never touch a brush again!—Rather cut my hand off! It is already too much that you frequent the showy circles so dear to *you*, so hateful to me.—You fancy I am incapable of jealousy!—If you only knew!"

Aurélie, touched by these words, reclined her head upon her husband's shoulder.

"You think to please me in making this confession," said she. "But you cannot deceive

me. To be jealous, one must be anxious—imagine a thousand follies—be capable of a thousand absurdities!—And *you* are so calm! Since we married, you have never once made a comment upon the persons who seek my society. It seems to interest you so little that I myself refrain from talking to you on the subject."

"Perhaps it is unnecessary."

"You wish to make me believe that you are on the watch unknown to me. Will you lay me a wager? More than once this season, I have been told that I am beautiful, clever, and attractive; in fact all that is generally said in such cases. I have been making conquests, while you were losing rubbers at whist. Martyr of jealousy as you pretend to be, I defy you to name one of them!"

"Not only one, but all!"

Aurélie started, and tried to discover whether her husband were serious.

"I should love you too much if I could believe it," said she; "but you are laughing at me."

Colonge rose, and taking her by the hand, led her to the painting.

"Can an artist be more humiliated?" said he smiling. "You have proved to me that, with the exception of the head of Madame de Grafhen, you have not deigned to bestow the slightest attention on my composition. There is cause for some interest, if you will only look. You may afterwards be less eager to bet."

While eyeing the picture, the countenance of Aurélie betrayed inexpressible astonishment, as she detected in the Teutonic garb, the ridiculous faces of Messieurs de Mariendorf, Don Antonio de Puertes y Cabra, Roquaincourt, La Berthonie, Felicien Regnier and others; in fact, the whole brigade of her admirers, past and present. Though guiltless and irreproachable, she blushed on beholding the enumeration of the list.

"Who has lost?—" inquired Colonge, maliciously pleased by her embarrassment.

"I am growing afraid of you," she replied, without looking him in the face.

"So much the better for me. You will henceforward respect my paintings."

"Are you a sorcerer?" inquired she anxiously.

"A husband had need be so."

"And you saw through all?"

"There was no great difficulty in the discovery."

"Do not laugh, for I assure you I think most seriously of all this. What a strange man you are to observe me thus, without breathing a word!"

"That is my secret. Be assured that not a movement of your's escapes me; that I see all—know all;—read your very thoughts—and that, if you deceived me——"

"You would be the death of me?"—cried Aurélie anxiously.

"I would be the death of you!" said Colonge, with much composure.

"I am satsfied!—You are dearer to me than ever!"—exclaimed the young wife, throwing her arms round her husband's neck. A noise in the adjoining room and several slight taps at the door, interrupted this tender embrace.

"It is I!" cried Monsieur de Livernais. "I know you are within, Colonge! Open the door, I have something amusing to tell you."

The artist, caring just then but little for the communications of his treacherous confidant, made a sign to his wife to be silent. But Aurélie experienced an eager desire to hear what the Baron had to say to her husband.

"Let him come in," said she. "I will retire to my hiding place. Above all, do not let him know that I am here."

While she concealed herself behind the curtain, Colonge hesitated. At length, he opened the door.

"The Bastille is not so well guarded, as your studio!"—observed Livernais, as he entered.

Holding Colonge by the hand, the Baron advanced towards the picture; and with astonished eyes, sought in vain the figure of the fair German.

"Am I blind?"—said he, "where on earth is Madame de Grafhen?"

"Behind yonder cloak!"—answered the artist.

"What sacrilege!—To blot out so perfect, so inimitable a head!—Are you mad?"

"What will Aurélie think?" mused the Baron. "She will fancy I have been making game of her, and I shall be in disgrace for a week."

Deploring the catastrophe which at once annihilated his treacherous projects, the Baron reflected that the net is not lost, though a few meshes be torn; and putting on a good countenance, sat down, while

Colonge was preparing his brushes and palette.

"Well!"—said the latter beginning to paint. "Now for your amusing story!"

"Cannot you guess?"—replied the Baron striving to appear cheerful. "What can it be—but the absurd position of Messieurs La Berthonie and Regnier."

"So, so!"—said Colonge glancing in the direction of his wife.—"What has happened?"

"There is an end of them both!"

"Indeed? You make quick work of translating people from life to death. You must give me your recipe. Pray be less mysterious. We are alone;—be sure that *I* shall not betray you."

"My dear fellow, since you insist upon knowing, my method is simple enough. Listen! Even as Achilles was invulnerable in all parts but the heel, the strongest man has in his position, character, mind, or person, some part equally weak with the heel of Achilles. It is there one must strike!"

"To continue your metaphor," said the painter, "where lies the heel of La Berthonie?"

"In his corpulence. He is clever, quick and artful, but coarse and portly. His obesity constitutes his assailable point."

"In what way?"

"Conscious of having exposed himself by dancing, he failed in his usual conversational efforts; and I had no difficulty in encouraging him in a disastrous course which terminated in the following catastrophe.—Yesterday, I purposely mounted Griselda; who, in rearing and frisking, is surpassed by few. La Berthonie, seated by the side of Madame de Gabriel, was as usual doing the agreeable to Madame Colonge, who was placed opposite to him. On approaching Berny, I, who am never fatigued, begged the fat gentleman to mount my horse a moment, in order that I might rest myself. He accepted; and scarcely was in the saddle, before my groom put spurs to his horse and made across a field,

feigning to be run away with. Griselda of course followed; and then, my dear Sir, ensued a scene well worthy of your pencil. Imagine La Berthonie, rolling in his saddle like a boat on the waves, from side to side, from head to tail; his hair and coat streaming in the wind, and at length grasping the neck of his steed;—having lost his stirrups, his whip, his saddle, his hat, his head, and being finally dropped into the voluptuous bed of a muddy ditch, into which my groom most artfully seduced him."

"But you must have placed his life in jeopardy?" said Colonge, humanely.

"Far worse!—I might have lamed poor Griselda, who is not used to carry elephants."

The two men laughed heartily; while Aurélie, no less amused, could with difficulty constrain herself.

"After such a performance," continued the Baron, "a man, had he the wit of Voltaire, must have become ridiculous. Women have

little mercy upon the absurd; and poor pursy La Berthonie rolling in the mud, was the very acme of absurdity, I promise you!"

"And Achilles II,—Felicien Regnier, has he also a vulnerable point?" demanded the artist.

"Heel from head to foot!" replied Livernais, with contempt. "Regnier is ill-bred, vain, awkward, and sensitive. I could strike where I liked. So sure in fact am I of my game, that I quietly slipped his neck into the first noose at hand."

"And which may that have been?"—

"The arms of Madame de Gabriel."

"Of Madame de Gabriel?"—exclaimed the artist, his wife eagerly listening.

"Even so," replied the Baron; "and I undertake to say, that the noose will prove effective. The excellent Viscountess, in spite of her rouge, and false hair, still retains the fervour of youth."

"Well?"

"Well! I behaved like a friend to her.

Previous to resigning herself to the decorum of old age, I secured her the first sighs of an ingenuous youth."

"Explain yourself?"

"Madame de Gabriel is named Aurélie—as well as your wife."

"And what then?"

"Do you not see my plan of campaign? Well, well, since I must be explicit, to introduce these sympathising souls to each other, I had only to pass a note from one handkerchief to another."

"It was Madame de Gabriel then, who received Regnier's *billet-doux?*"—exclaimed the artist, laughing

"With gratitude!—It is so consolatory for declining beauty to become once more the object of a volcanic passion! The Viscountess has, for these two days, been lost in a dream of happiness. She is grown ten years younger—sighs profoundly—ruminates upon the setting sun—the fall of the leaf—zephyrs—moonlight—and sympathy of souls!"

"Is Regnier really a poet?"

"I should imagine not; for yesterday, while gazing upon her withered face, he became lost in bashful stupefaction."

"But he will soon discover the mystification, and escape the gratuitous chains of Madame de Gabriel."

"I defy him; he is a prisoner for ages to come. She is obstinately determined upon becoming the Beatrix of the new Dante."

The idea of Madame de Gabriel as a Beatrix and the muse of the poet with the flowing mane, provoked the merriment of Aurélie to such a degree, that her laughter nearly betrayed her.—At that moment, there came a loud knock at the door.

CHAPTER IX.

THE mirth excited by the foregoing recital was so vehement, that Colonge could not refuse admission to the individual desirous to enter; but he first drew a curtain across his painting, placed there in order to screen it from obtrusive eyes.

The door opened. Colonge who had assumed his usual gravity, could with difficulty preserve it on recognising the heroic rider whose absurd adventure the Baron had been just describing.

"Is it you, La Berthonie? I am glad to see you. I feared your accident of yesterday would force you to keep your room."

"The Baron has related to you then, his facetious frolic?—It was perhaps the subject of the roars of laughter, I heard coming up stairs?"

"What do you mean by *frolic?*"—inquired the Baron.

"The two rivals eyed one another like wrestlers about to begin the death-struggle: the one glorying in preceding triumphs—the other evincing the hope of a speedy revenge.

"I allude," said he, "to your abominable trick of mounting me upon a vicious horse, for which I am come hither to demand satisfaction."

At this declaration of war, pronounced in a firm impressive voice, the Baron, as well as the painter, became serious in a moment.

"You laugh no longer;—I fear I am a spoil-sport?"—said La Berthonie, gazing from one to the other. "You were merry enough just now."

"We are always so," replied Colonge,

watching the physiognomy of his two friends.

"In that case, laugh away!" said the portly gentleman ensconcing himself comfortably in a chair.

"But at what?"—observed Colonge.

"You mean at *whom*."

"At every body. The best way of offending no one."

"If you choose, you may commence with me.

"Upon condition that we each have our turn," said the artist good humouredly.

"Of course," replied La Berthonie; "make yourselves easy. You will lose nothing by waiting. But as regards myself, what saint do you think I resemble?"

"What *saint?*" cried the painter.

"St. Paul, I should imagine," observed the Baron, "for St. Paul was corpulent and thick set."

"Unlike many others, who are thick only in the head," replied La Berthonie, not the least daunted by his sarcasm. "But

that is *not* the point of resemblance, to which I allude. You are aware that the conversion of St. Paul took place after a fall from his horse, in journeying to Damascus. Since my mischance in tumbling from the mare of Monsieur de Livernais, I too have become a penitent. I accept it as a humiliation; and am come, my dear Colonge, in great contrition, to confess the wrongs of which I have been guilty towards you."

No sooner had Monsieur La Berthonie assumed an air of compunction, than the Baron betrayed a vague anxiety.

"My confession will doubtless appear strange," said the portly gentleman, in a hypocritical tone. "Rarely does it fall to the lot of husbands to hear such truths. You will be indignant; but I trust the frankness of my proceeding, as well as the sincerity of my remorse, will win my pardon. Know then, my dear Colonge, that, forgetting the holy tie of friendship between us, I have deeply injured you by a guilty project. Let the rare love-

liness of Madame Colonge plead my excuse."

Involuntarily the eyes of the painter looked towards the curtain, behind which Aurélie was attentively listening.

"What has Madame Colonge to do with your confession?" — inquired the artist eagerly; while the Baron was folding up a cigarillo.

"Alas! my dear friend," said La Berthonie, with a deep sigh; "there lies the secret of my fault. For this last fortnight, have I secretly cherished in my heart, a guilty passion, which I now bitterly deplore!"

"You amaze me," said the husband, with perfect composure.

"He knew all," thought La Berthonie, noticing the unconcern of the artist. "*Who* has betrayed me?—It must be that designing knave, Livernais, whose treachery authorizes me to be little scrupulous.—My confession is at an end!" said he, aloud. "I repeat to you

that I am deeply conscious of my crime, and hope to find you merciful and magnanimous. I am on the point of starting for Italy, which must at once convince you of the sincerity of these professions."

"What say you, Baron?"—demanded Colonge, with a malicious smile. "Must we pardon him?"

"Be merciful!" replied Monsieur de Livernais, looking at his former rival, as much as to say, you see I am pleading in your favour, so do not treat me as an enemy.

"Receive absolution," said Colonge cheerfully. "Repentance such as yours, is too rare not to merit forgiveness."

La Berthonie seized the hand of the artist.

"What greatness of soul!"—cried he, "Augustus pardons Cinna!—Baron," he resumed, "can you remain unmoved by such a spectacle? Does not your heart tell you that the joys of friendship are the purest man can taste? Come, come! yield to the generous inspiration

I read in your eyes. If you could but know the delight of shaking in full sincerity a friend by the hand! Colonge is generous. At the first word of repentance, you see, his arms will be open, even to you!"

"Parry that thrust if you can," thought the fat gentleman, at the end of his pathetic allocution.

"I do not exactly understand you," replied the Baron, much embarrassed.

"Baron, Baron—I thought better of you. What! when I—your junior—furnish you with a good example, you persist in the work of darkness? You are too hardened! Are you, then, resolved to die unreformed?"

"Sir," faltered Livernais, in agony, "if you have any thing important to communicate, allow me to propose an explanation in my own house."

"Why not here?" said Colonge; "there is nobody to interfere."

"Come come, La Berthonie, what has our friend Livernais done, that you threaten him thus?"

"What has he done? Did not his horse, at the risk of breaking my neck, bring about my conversion? Would you have me forget such a service? or can I better testify my gratitude than by saving him from the abyss, in which I was myself immersed only yesterday? Ay, Baron! You may frown and look fierce; but I am resolved to restore you to virtuous feelings, in spite of yourself. As we were alike sinners, let us be alike penitents! Since you were as ambitious as myself of shining in the eyes of Madame Colonge—like me."

"This exceeds all endurance, Sir," interrupted the Baron, trembling with rage, "you know not what you are saying."

"You are mistaken. I assure you that I know perfectly well what I am saying, and equally understand your vexation. Can you

deny being in love with the charming wife of our friend?"—

"Colonge!" exclaimed the Baron; "I am amazed how you can suffer such indecorum in your own house! Pray put an end to this folly!"—

Unable to parry the rude assault of his rival, the Baron adroitly called to his aid the man he was accused of betraying;—a step which perfectly succeeded.

"Monsieur de Livernais is right," said Colonge, addressing himself to La Berthonie; "this discussion appears to me altogether superfluous. The name of my wife is out of place here, and I entreat you to put an end to the discussion."

"Since you choose to remain blind, far be it from me to intrude upon you the means of regaining your powers of vision;" replied the stout gentleman with a smile. "If you are resolved to warm the serpent in your bosom, do it, and welcome! Some people choose

to be stung to the quick; since you are of the number, as the peasant said to Cleopatra, 'I wish you joy of your asp.' However, since you will not accept my succour as an auxiliary, receive my defiance as a fair and open foe! Let us all do our worst, since our worst pleases you;—and so, my service to you both."

Monsieur La Berthonie, ever cool and collected, bowed courteously to the two gentlemen, and left the room, humming an air of the Cenerentola. Scarcely was he on the staircase, when the Baron rejoined him.

'At what o'clock are you to be found at home?"—said he significantly.

"Always until three," said the other abruptly.

"Good!—To-morrow, then, I will be with you."

"I shall have the honour of expecting you," was the reply;—and the two rivals parted.

While La Berthonie descended the stairs, humming his tune with still more energy than before, the Baron paused at the door of the studio, in which the painter and his wife were carrying on the following dialogue.

"Are you not infinitely amused?" inquired Colonge of his wife, as he opened the curtain behind which she had been concealed.

"Certainly—but the affair is not over."

"On the contrary—merely beginning."

"What will come next?"

"A duel, perhaps."

"You think it possible they will fight?"

"Unless you succeed in bringing them to reason; which will not be easy, for they are furious, especially Livernais, naturally enraged at being so calumniated."

"Calumniated?" exclaimed Aurélie.

Instead of replying, the artist redrew the curtains; and just in time, for the Baron now re-entered the room. The two men surveyed

each other with astonishment, well assumed if not genuine.

"What say you to all this?"—said the Baron, crossing his arms.

"That I can make neither head nor tail of it!" replied Colonge, imitating the same attitude. "Could you have supposed La Berthonie capable of such———?"

"No, I confess it exceeds all I could have imagined."

"What deceit—what hypocrisy!"

"Tartuffe was an angel compared with him."

"What think you of the new system of turning away accusation, by becoming an accuser? To wish to deprive me of your esteem!"

"To attribute to you his own perfidy; and embroil two friends like us!"

"Abominable!"

"Infamous!"—After exhausting their litany of abuse, the two friends paused for breath.

"I trust, my dear Colonge, that the absurdities you have just heard, will yield no prejudice to our mutual terms of friendship," said the Baron.

"For what do you take me?" replied the painter;—"do I not know your excellence?"

"If one is to believe Beaumarchais, calumny always leaves its trace behind!"

"How is it possible to credit the word of a man who makes accusations purely to avenge himself!"

"How indeed! I am overjoyed at your seeing the real motive of his conduct. Your opinion then regarding me is not the least changed?"

"Not in the slightest degree!" replied Colonge, taking the Baron's hand; "I have exactly as much confidence in you to-day, as I had yesterday."

"Go and be hanged, La Berthonie!" thought the Baron, enchanted by the good faith

of his friend; "know that it requires a mightier power than yours to open the eyes of the blind."

Madame Colonge, growing impatient, now nearly betrayed her concealment. She began to perceive the complicated knavery of which she had been the object. Monsieur de Livernais had conducted himself so artfully and with such caution, that, deceived by the semblance of sincere and respectful admiration, she had never a moment mistrusted him.

Grateful for the friendly offices of the Baron, she had sanctioned an increasing intimacy which, by imperceptible progress, was attaining all the force and privileges of friendship. By one word, Monsieur La Berthonie had rent the veil so artfully woven by his rival, through which the light now penetrated. A thousand insignificant trifles, hitherto misunderstood, now stood forth in their real meaning, and presented themselves to the mind of the undeceived woman. In propor-

tion as she saw clear, her husband's blindness became incomprehensible. As charmed as she had been with his jealous fit an hour before, was she now shocked at the childish credulity with which he received the hypocritical protestations of Monsieur de Livernais.

"If he loved me," thought she, "or were he as jealous as he pretends, could he be thus easily deceived?"

While indignant at the Baron's perfidy, her husband appeared in a light almost ridiculous. She felt half inclined to rush from behind the curtain into the presence of the two astonished men, bid the Baron quit the house, then, enjoy the pleasure of reproving and enlightening her husband. But this was impossible. What would the Baron think of her being concealed as a listener? Fortunately for Aurélie, there was a door by which she could retire unseen; taking advantage of which, she departed, to return in an instant afterwards, by the usual entrance of the studio.

Colonge, unprepared for this manœuvre, meekly waited the result, while the Baron coolly and politely accosted her.

"I am glad to find you here, Sir," said Aurélie, to the Baron. "I want to scold you. Where is the album you promised to bring me?"

Monsieur de Livernais tapped his forehead, as people do when reminded of forgetfulness.

"I must have lost my senses," replied he. "This morning I went purposely to my library to seek it; I will send it you this evening."

"This evening?" observed Aurélie, apparently disappointed.

"I will go for it this moment," replied the Baron, taking up his hat.

"I regret the trouble I am giving you," said Aurélie; "but when you said this evening, I understood it as a mere pretext; and patience is not a preeminent quality in woman."

The Baron bowed, and departed with the obsequious complaisance of a lover.

Darting into his cabriolet, and taking the shortest road, he soon made his way to his drawing-room; where, to his astonishment, he discovered Regnier stretched upon his divan, in the attitude of a lion fiercely awaiting his prey.

CHAPTER X.

The Baron manifested more emotion than might have been expected from a man of the world, when Regnier rose, and after a cold and formal bow, accosted him.

"Excuse the liberty of my having established myself during your absence, Sir," said he; "your servant informed me that you returned to dinner, and as my business will admit of no delay, I presumed to wait for you."

"You did well!" replied Livernais, wondering aside what could be the object of his inopportune visit. "Does he want me to listen to some of his abominable verses?" thought he.

"I will not detain you long, Sir," said the poet.

"Proceed, I beg of you," replied the Baron, motioning him to sit down.

But Regnier pompously refused the offered seat.

"Allow me, Sir, to put a question to you;" said he, abruptly. "I doubt not of finding the frankness usual in men of honour."

"To the point, pray!" retorted the Baron, growing impatient.

"The point is this," said the poet, with still greater deliberation. "I hear that, at the ball of Madame de Gabriel, you obtained possession of a lady's handkerchief containing a letter. Is this true?"

The Baron, startled by this sudden attack, in spite of his usual presence of mind, felt embarrassed. Truth may be inconvenient, but the humiliation of a lie is insupportable. Without hesitation, the Baron, who if devoid of principle lacked not courage, determined upon risking the simple truth.

"It is the fact," said he; "you have been

rightly informed. At the ball to which you allude to, I accidently found a handkerchief, exquisitely embroidered, containing a note, written in a still more exquisite style."

"You read it, then?" inquired Regnier.

"With much pleasure. The Nouvelle Héloïse, Werther, or the Letters of Jacopo Ortis, are tame by comparison with its glowing ardour. What spirit!—what fire!—what poetry! He who wrote that note, must be a man of no ordinary merit; and it only depends upon me to place him in the position to which he is so justly entitled."

With the easy assurance of a man inured to such perplexities, the Baron succeeded in pacifying the indignation he had seen flashing in the eyes of the poet; and with a placid smile upon his own lips, he paused for the reply of Regnier: who seemed uncertain whether to accept the exaggerated compliments of his foe, or resent them as an impertinence. The poet finally inclined towards the latter;

and the idea of being mystified, served to increase his resentment.

"Sir," said he casting a ferocious look upon the Baron; "I know your genius for satire; but the moment is ill chosen. I am not come here to waste my time in buffoonery, but for a serious explanation. You confess to have been in possession of a letter, of which I am the author; where is it? I desire it may be instantly restored."

"Compose yourself, and listen to me," replied the master of the house. "You are now angry! I hope soon to convince you that, far from laughing at your expense, I have rendered you an essential service. Allow me to state the facts. You are, or think yourself, in love with Madame Colonge. I am the friend of her husband; in which capacity, how was I to act, chance having placed the letter in my power? To allow it to reach its address, would have been to betray Colonge. To return it to you, would not have determined

you to cancel it, and write no more. To burn it, would have been an act of Vandalism. In this dilemma, I decided upon a measure of which you will admit the advantage; since it conciliates the duties of friendship, the respect due to the transcendant qualities of Madame Colonge, and the interests of your literary fame, in which, believe me, I am profoundly concerned. Poets are rare, and I see in *you*, the stuff of which poets are made!"

Livernais paused to watch the expression of Regnier's face. Fumes of indignation still obscured the brain of the poet; but they were overpowered by the odour of the Baron's incense. His countenance still wearing the frown of indignation, as well as the blush of vanity, resembled those masks of the carnival which cry with one side the face, and laugh with the other.

"Do you not consider Madame de Gabriel a charming woman?" replied the Baron, in a soothing voice.

"Madame de Gabriel?" exclaimed the poet in confusion.

"Were I to tell you that her admiration of your style borders upon enthusiasm, were I to tell you that she deems you the first writer of the day, were I to tell you that she reads and re-reads your letter a hundred times a day, what would you reply?"

"That nothing can be more absurd than the enthusiasm of a withered old woman! But I cannot think you serious. What can you mean by such mockery?"

"It is the simple truth."

"Then your treachery to both is unpardonable."

"Why unpardonable? The letter addressed by you to Aurélie Colonge, was forwarded to Aurélie de Gabriel. Not a day passes, but much greater blunders occur at the post-office."

This explicit declaration only served to increase the exasperation of Regnier, who stood

twisting his hat with rage. At length he addressed the Baron in a calm and imposing voice.

"Sir," said he, "you have given the explanation I solicited. I have only one more favour to ask, which is, that you will settle the preliminaries of the meeting which you must perceive to be inevitable."

Already resolved upon fighting with Monsieur La Berthonie, whose conduct appeared to him, most offensive, the Baron was averse to meeting the poet, against whom he had no feeling of resentment; for though a duel may be gratifying in a moment of anger, it is revolting in cold blood, and when unnecessary. A man of the world, and fearing ridicule above every thing, the Baron did not relish the idea of going out with an ill washed, ill combed, ill dressed literary scrub, which would expose him to the ridicule of society; so that far from taking offence at the provocation, he assumed a most pacific smile.

"Grant me only two minutes' attention," said he, calmly. "If you still persist in fighting, we will fight. But before resorting to that extremity, let me explain the motives of my conduct; and let us talk of yourself. Glory is your object, is it not? You are conscious of possessing powerful talents? You feel the germ of genius within you;—you recognise the eagle's egg described by Victor Hugo. What would be the influence on your career, of the passion real orimaginary you have conceived for Madame Colonge? Most disastrous! I do not allude to the perils or obstacles to be overcome, for they exalt the imagination. Madame Colonge is a virtuous and devoted wife, and it would be impossible to seduce her from her duties."

"There is no such word as impossible in the French language," interrupted the poet.

"Good! granted if you will! But let us suppose that you have surmounted all obstacles, and that Madame Colonge loves you.—

You see, I suppose the best. What will be the result?—Happy, or otherwise, your passion will get the better of your genius. You are not aware of the profound egotism of woman's heart. She will love you for her own sake, not for your's. She will absorb your thoughts, your time, your existence. So far from urging you in the path to glory, she will try to clip the wings of your ambition. If you write verses, they must be for her alone. Talk to her of posterity, and she will reply to you by mere matter of fact, that will enervate by degrees the energies of your soul. You will waste your whole literary talent in amorous correspondence; and some day or other, when you seek the inventive faculties with which you are by nature gifted, you will be surprised to find them extinguished. Thus failing in your destiny, instead of becoming a poet of eminence, you will live and die a mere love-sick swain. You will console yourself, it is true, with the love of a very pretty woman,

while it lasts; but will such compensation, *always* suffice?—Will you not, like me, reflect bitterly, that there is not a woman in the world worth the sacrifice of talents such as yours?"—

Monsieur de Livernais addressed the poet with such an appearance of sincere and profound conviction, that though at first impatient, he ended by lending an attentive ear. Subdued in spite of himself, the poet, forgetting his woes, attempted to refute the arguments of his wily adversary.

"Your observations," said he, "merit some attention; but they are applicable to other women, besides the one of whom we speak."

"By no means, my dear friend. That enchanting torment called woman, though vain, capricious, selfish and despotic in the first blush of youth, and apt when in all the glory of her beauty, greatly to exaggerate the power of her charms, becomes affectionate

and conciliating some years later, and faithful and devoted at a period when, less confident in her charms, she sees the necessity of making well-timed concessions. Constitutional monarchy follows absolute power. After being a slave, man may become master—if he choose. He then enjoys consideration, is flattered, cared for, and finds his ideas and tastes approved and adopted. Were it possible, the world would be placed at his feet. Sweet and precious, is the affection of a clever and amiable woman, still young, but not *too* young. Madame de Gabriel, for instance, for we must return to her, is one of those beings uniting every quality worthy the regard of a man of superior mind."

"But she is so old!" exclaimed the poet, "forty at least."

"Mere calumny! She is only thirty-eight, and has a right to proclaim herself only thirty —the age in fashion."

"But she is downright ugly!"

"Her beauty is not of a high order; but her physiognomy is highly piquant."

"Thanks to rouge, and false eye-brows."

"What matters the cause, if the effect be good?"

"Not much. But she is so deficient in mind."

"What ingratitude! A woman who rates your poetry higher than that of Lamartine, or Victor Hugo!"

"Does she, indeed?" inquired Regnier.

"And proclaims her opinion in all societies! For your own sake, cherish such a friend. She is more important than you imagine. You possess talent which ought to see the day; nor must you hide your light under a bushel. On the contrary, you must have a stage—a rostrum—a pedestal. At Madame de Gabriel's, you will find all this. She is rich, influential, and receives most of the leading men of the day, as well as the most fashionable women.

From such a stage, you will rise to fame, like a balloon to the sky. The friends of the Viscountess will be your champions. Your success has became a matter of personal importance to her; and she will move heaven and earth to serve you. Pampering the cerberi of criticism till you are distinguished by the leading journals, your own fame will then secure you wealth and immortality."

The Baron paused to take breath; and the suspension was well timed, for in the hearts and heads of embryo authors, there is a feeling prevalent over all others, even that of love.

For six months had Felicien Regnier carried about in his pocket his manuscript carefully tied up with pink ribbon like an infant on the day of its christening, seeking the literary godfather called an editor; an all but imaginary being for a beginner. At sight of a new name subscribed to a new work, a publisher invariably takes fright. The "Dews and Mists" of Felicien, had experienced the destiny

of other virgin inspirations. Not one of the Parisian booksellers had dared to risk the printing this new effort of genius. Rejected on all sides, and menaced with eternal obscurity, Regnier relapsed from the most daring illusions into abject despair, and had already began to deem himself an injured genius.

The words of the Baron sounded in his ears, much as to those of a despairing old maid, the announcement of some officious friend, that a good match is awaiting her consent. Faithless to the bright eyes of Madame Colonge, the poet bestowed a moment's thought upon the Viscountess; who, through the magic words, critics, and an "editor," became in his eyes, clever—pretty—almost young. On the other hand, he took a fresh view of the conduct of Monsieur de Livernais.

"His proceedings were strange, and incon-

siderate," thought he; "but his intention may have been good; and in acting thus he thought to serve me."

"Well!" exclaimed the Baron, watching the effect of his eloquence upon the countenance of the young poet, "have I injured you, or advanced your interest?"

"Advanced your own, perhaps," replied Regnier.

"In what way?"

"You have got rid of a rival."

"Do you fancy then, *I* am in love with Madame Colonge? What folly."

"Folly, or not, it is a fact! I have it from good authority."

"I bet a thousand to one, that La Berthonie is the author of this calumny—this absurdity. If you choose to believe the assertions of a Gascon, he will make you fancy you see the stars at mid-day. I, the intimate friend of Colonge, in love

with his wife? an old man in love with a woman of twenty? You must be out of your senses. It is true, the other day I played you a schoolboy trick; but if you choose, it may be turned to your own advantage."

Regnier paused. During the preceding dialogue, his resentment had melted away like wax exposed to the sun; though a feeling of wounded vanity prevented his immediately accepting the advice of Monsieur de Livernais.

"Sir," said he, "this discussion has taken so unforeseen a turn, that I would reflect before I decide. I must consult a friend, who enjoys all my confidence. Allow me to postpone till to-morrow my definitive reply."

"As you please," said the Baron with a smile. "You will find my opinion unalterable; never can I allow so fine a genius as yours, to remain unknown."

Gratified by this last compliment, the poet bid the Baron adieu, in a manner far from hostile.

"This requires reflection," thought he, on his way home to his lodgings. "Aurélie is really charming, and I love her as woman was never loved. But if it be true that my passion is a rock upon which my genius must be wrecked, have I a right to accomplish such a suicide?—There is some truth in what the Baron says. He affirms that the Viscountess is only thirty-eight;—at that age a woman is not so very old. Ninon de l'Enclos, Diane de Poitiers, and many other illustrious beauties, have inspired passions at nearly double the age."

In the active imagination of the poet, the Beatrix of five and forty, was gradually usurping the throne of the Beatrix of twenty; thanks to the important question of a publisher, so dexterously raised by the Baron; who, on

getting rid of his importunate visitor, returned in all haste to the artist; where, however, another ordeal awaited him more conclusive than all the rest.

CHAPTER XI.

THE result of the day's work had been on the whole favourable to Monsieur de Livernais, who, from three critical positions had adroitly extricated himself. As regarded the artist, and the poet, he felt himself secure. In the case of Monsieur La Berthonie, it is true, things looked more serious. But the Baron was little moved by the prospect; the tongue of the corpulent gentleman being more active than his sword.

"Yesterday, I gave him a lesson in the noble art of riding," said he; "to-morrow, he shall have one in that of fencing."

The prospect of a duel is sometimes a cause of excitement, rather than depression. By nature far from timid, the countenance of Monsieur de Livernais evinced an unusual degree of daring, and self assurance; and his very manner of dashing among the carts, omnibuses and carriages of all kinds, announced a man who knew no impediment to his will. The Baron found the door of the studio closed.

"How fortunate that he should be gone out!" was his immediate reflection.

On being announced in the drawing-room, his wishes were gratified; Madame Colonge was alone, seated on a sofa, near the fire, apparently plunged in profound reflection. Such was her preoccupation, that she was not aware of any one entering the room.

The Baron paused for a moment, then gently approached Aurélie.

"Here is the album I promised you, Ma-

dame," said he; "I should have been here sooner, had I not been detained by an importunate visitor."

Aurélie accepted the book, and laid it upon the table.

"I have seen my husband's picture," said she, casting a resentful look at the Baron.

"You fancy, of course, that I wished to deceive you. But I swear, that the head in question, existed only yesterday. I saw it with my eyes."

"I saw it this morning," replied Aurélie, with suppressed indignation.

A gleam of satisfaction brightened the face of the Baron; and taking a chair, he sat down beside his fascinating friend.

"Since I am your confidant," said he, in a persuasive voice, "you will surely tell me all. No one could listen with more sincere, or more absolute devotion. What has happened?"

"A mere trifle," replied she, bitterly smiling. "My husband saw that the head displeased me, and effaced it."

"He really made that sacrifice? I admit that it must have cost something to the pride of an artist. Still more so to the heart of a lover."

"You fancy then, that he still loves that woman?"

"I may have been wrong," replied the Baron, artfully. "But you insisted on knowing my opinion; I wished to spare your feelings."

"You suppose me weaker than I really am. Learn," replied Aurélie haughtily, "that I have energy sufficient to listen to truths, however cruel. Other women, in my position, would faint—talk of dying—melt into tears. But I will endure all with calmness and fortitude. When convinced of possessing my husband's affections, I felt the deepest devotion in return. But now that he has ceased to love

me, I should despise myself, were I to persist in loving him. This change in my feelings surprises me. I did not think myself so determined or so revengeful. While in doubt, I suffered much; now that I doubt no more, affliction is at an end."

"Patience is a poor comfort," replied the Baron. "Your fortitude, Madam, surprises me."

"Would you have me weep, despair, sink, under my sufferings?" exclaimed Aurélie, with a convulsive laugh. "Would you have me become the victim of one who deceives and injures me?"

"No, no! I am not such a wretch! I should deserve your scorn, and that of the world."

"On the contrary, you would ensure its sympathy."

"Pity would be the worst evil of all. Am I so old, or so ugly, as to create feelings of compassion. Monsieur le Baron, if I thought you pitied me, I would never forgive you."

"But what if your injuries inspired me with a sentiment far, far more tender, more devoted than pity. Would you pardon me?" said he, gradually approaching her.

"Where pardon is required," replied Madame Colonge, "offence must have been intended.'

Throughout the interview, the Baron perceiving the excited state of the indignant wife, had judged it a fitting opportunity for making some demonstration of his views; and now he chose to arm himself with his most invincible look of fascination.

"You speak of offence!" whispered he, in his most pathetic tone of voice. "Is it thus you would interpret the profoundest sympathy, the most sincere devotion, the most fervent tenderness, or, in one word, a love such as woman never before inspired."

"You really love me then?" inquired Madame Colonge.

"To madness!" replied Livernais, who, on

seeing a smile on the lips of Aurélie, began to anticipate an easy victory over her affections. The Baron being fifty years of age, and naturally of the old school of gallantry, judged it necessary to make his declaration on his knees. Prostrating himself on the carpet, with all the seeming respect in which his heart was deficient, Aurélie did more than smile, she laughed outright.

"Who wins?" she inquired of her husband, who meanwhile had stole up behind the Baron.

Astonished at a question not addressed to himself, the superannuated gallant following the eyes of Madame Colonge, abruptly turned round;—when, finding the artist gazing at him, with his usual imperturbable demeanour, he started up, and seized his hat with the precipitation of a man uncertain whether he is to make his exit by the door, or the window.

"Where are you going?" said Colonge, with

a smile as calm as it was ironical. "Pray take a seat, I have neither dagger nor pistol about me."

But a thing the Baron dreaded more than such weapons, was ridicule!

"If I retreat now, this will be my field of Waterloo!" thought he; and mustering all his energy and courage, he accepted the proffered chair.

"I know not what may be the game!" said he, with a grimace, purporting to be a smile. "All I know is, that I am a loser."

"You are not the only one," said Aurélie, looking archly at her husband.

"Too true, Baron! I am your companion in misfortune!" said Colonge, with perfect equanimity. "Allow me to explain all this; or, in spite of your sagacity, it will be difficult to understand our manœuvres. Know that the scene in which you have just figured as Tartuffe, is of my wife's devising, who seems to have justly relied upon your docility and elo-

quence. To make the scene perfect, like Orgon, I should have been concealed under the table, but I chose to listen at the door. The position is less dramatic, it is true; but unaccustomed, like yourself, to act upon my knees, I was less exact in my part. A man can but do his best."

"Or a woman either," exclaimed Aurélie, laughing maliciously. "Say, Baron! was not my performance of an indignant wife tolerable for a first attempt?"

"The Baron was the best actor of us all!" observed the artist. "There was something sublime in his 'You speak of offence.'"

"I prefer the emphasis of his 'to madness!'" cried Aurélie, mimicking the tone of the disappointed gallant.

"And his genuflection was worthy of his eloquence!" continued Colonge.

"In the last century, it was the fashion to swear eternal fidelity on your knees;" observed

Aurélie, with playful derision. "A man can but do his best."

During this process of slow torture, the Baron sat defenceless in his chair. Not a word could he find in the way of retort; and in spite of his efforts to smile, he was no better than a spiked gun.

"I must now," resumed the artist, in the same vein of irony, "explain to you the programme of our little drama. You know how I scorned the hints of La Berthonie, and refused to believe in your passion for my wife. Aurélie is more credulous. Instead of admiring the system of Matrimonial Police, by which I established you as her guardian, she persisted in doubting your sincerity. And when I asserted you to be the most faithful of my friends, in charging you with hypocrisy and perfidy. Our discussion terminated in the English fashion—with a bet."

"Of which I appear to be the victim!" said the Baron, rising abruptly.

All he now hoped, was a safe retreat.

"You are a man of genius," said he to the artist; "but your wife is unluckily as clever as yourself. With equal chances I might still defend myself. But with two to one against me, it is better to submit to defeat. In return for the lesson you have given me, allow me to offer you one counsel. Henceforward, watch over your wife yourself. The eye of a husband is more vigilant than the best Matrimonial Police in the world."

Without waiting for an answer, the Baron bowed and retired.

The advice thus singularly given, seems to have proved auspicious to the happiness of the artist and his wife; for Monsieur and Madame Colonge are now cited as models of domestic felicity. Aurélie, convinced of her injustice, and enlisted in the professional ambitions of her husband, has learned to dispense with the empty triumphs of her own vanity; and,

apprized of the anxieties to which they might give rise, has since conducted herself with such exemplary prudence, and so devoted herself to the pleasures and duties of home, as to render superfluous the intervention of a MATRIMONIAL POLICE.

[redacted]

DECORUM.

DECORUM.

CHAPTER I.

THE chief object of a Parisian in his promenades, is to see and be seen; and the places where it is possible to walk without being crushed by the throng, are under sentence of universal contempt. Human beings follow in each other's track, like sheep; and fashion is the dog which barks at the flock and causes them to hustle together.

Among the lounges abandoned for others of less merit, is the Jardin des Plantes. This melancholy garden is situated on the left bank of the Seine, near the Hospital of La Pitié,

the Wine Market, the prison of the National Guard; and vainly do its gates stand invitingly open to the few passengers who traverse the bridge of Austerlitz. Vain are its botanical wonders, vain is the attraction of its well-lodged lions and tigers. With the exception of gaping provincials, or a few Great Britons to whom an excursion on the continent consists rather in a verification more minute than intellectual of the matter contained in Galignani's Hand-book, the frequenters of this scientific resort, are as few and far between as the shipwrecked adventurers, described by Virgil. Old people or invalids covetous of a little sunshine, wandering from bench to bench to escape the shade; the halt, the blind, the dumb, unhappy wretches for whom life hath neither bud nor blossom; nurses and children, who travel with stores of gingerbread from the monkeys to the bears; workmen out of employ, envying the better fate of the beasts, housed and fed gratuitously, are the sole fre-

quenters of this beautiful garden, to which the most deserted spots of the town appear noisy and animated. But though the dispiriting isolation of the Jardin des Plantes may terrify the mere lounger, there is still a class upon whom the common place feeling has but little influence; to which solitude, far from being a cause of disgust, constitutes a first rate attraction.

To this interesting class, probably belonged an individual of about twenty-five years of age, and a female still younger; who, one fresh April morning in 1828, pursued their way along the tortuous paths of the Swiss valley towards the Belvidere. Never had the deer and gazelles browsing in their green enclosures been disturbed by the endearments of so well-matched a couple. The tender air with which the young man pressed the willing arm of his companion, and her modest submission to this mute token of affection, announced a perfect sympathy of feeling.

The very harmony of their gait, and their simplest gestures, betrayed the perfume emanating from that rose of the heart—an innocent attachment. One might have supposed them a newly married couple enjoying the early days of the honeymoon, had not a trifling circumstance negatived the conjecture; the young woman being in mourning, while nothing in the costume of the man announced the uniformity exacted by conjugal custom.

If therefore a considerable intimacy of sentiment was incontestable, its legitimacy was certainly equivocal. Such however was the air of modesty imprinted upon the face of the female, and such the respectful deportment of her friend, that prudery itself must have hesitated to deduce unfavourable conjectures.

They proceeded slowly, occasionally mistaking the way; perhaps intentionally, for there are other truants besides schoolboys, who prefer the longest road. The gentleman amused himself by touching with his cane, the

animals gazing behind their gratings; while the lady seemed to hang upon his arm, with the inertness of a bird, whose buoyant wings remain wilfully closed.

In spite of the pre-occupations of that exclusive sentiment so aptly defined by Madame de Stael, as "egotism for two," anxiety was depicted in the face of the interesting woman, whenever she came in contact with other frequenters of the garden; more especially, those whose dress announced the higher order of society. To avoid them, she would fain have retreated; had not her companion remonstrated with her on the weakness of such conduct.

"Really, Adrienne," said he, after a stronger demonstration of alarm than the rest, "you will drive me wild with your terrors! Do you suppose that your acquaintances of the Rue Taranne will take the trouble of watching us in the Jardin des Plantes? Remember we are as far from Paris here, as if in some forest

in America! Besides, what is there to fear? are you not mistress of your actions? Has any one a right to control them?"

"No one in particular. But the world!" replied the timid young woman. "A widow of twenty relapses into her minority and becomes the ward of the world. In the circle of Madame de Chantevilliers alone, I possess half a dozen self-instituted, officious guardians; who, on the pretext of taking interest in me and my want of experience, beset me with their precepts and advice. Should one of those good people detect me with you at this moment, what would she think or say?"

"What signify their absurdities?"

"Brave them if you will, Adolphe, but *I* must conform to the opinion of society. Be sincere! was it not imprudent of you to entice me out this morning?—I am waiting in fear and trembling the punishment of my indiscretion."

"But, after all, where is the harm of our walk?" inquired Adolphe. "Are we not to be shortly united?"

"Once married, we may walk together as much as we please. You may then experience less inclination for my company."

At this insinuation, the young man pressed her arm tenderly within his own.

"Alone with *you* in a desart!"—whispered he—as became an engaged lover.

They now slackened their pace absorbed in mutual happiness; silent, but expressing their feelings by mutual pressure of the arm. Had a well at that moment lain in their path, they would have fallen into it, like the astrologer in the fable! Fortunately, their aberrations, instead of provoking such a catastrophe, led them only into contact with an elderly gentleman, as absent as themselves, who stood entranced before a brood of web-footed Muscovy ducks, to which he was paternally throwing pieces of cake.

This amiable naturalist was attired in a long skirted chocolate-coloured great coat, at one of the button holes of which figured the ribbon of the Legion of Honour; and on finding himself hustled by the dreamy couple, he hastily turned round his yellow weazened face, the pointed termination of which strongly recalled the muzzle of a jackal, or the well-known feature of Robespierre. His deep set eyes, half concealed by thick and grizzly eyebrows, shot forth a penetrating glance; which, after indiscreetly scrutinizing the interior of the lady's hat, fixed upon her admirer with the most ironical expression of surprise. On recognizing the individual he had stumbled against, he touched his hat, and mumbled a few words of apology. Adolphe, meanwhile, blushed to the eyes; for the old gentleman, without listening, looked again towards Adrienne with more curiosity than respect, and walked away, still casting furtive glances at the young couple.

"Who is that gentleman, and why do you blush?" inquired Adrienne of her admirer.

"More alarms?"—replied he, striving to conceal his confusion. "Your perpetual fear put me out of countenance."

"But who is that man?"—

"The one of all our acquaintance whom we have the least to fear. He remarked my stupid confusion, and I have no doubt is much diverted; for in spite of the unsophisticated amusement in which we surprised him, he is more malicious than all the apes in the garden put together! It is an old friend of my family, who on several occasions has evinced real proofs of interest in my favour. In fact, it is the chief clerk of the Home Department, of whom I have already spoken—Monsieur Sabathier.

"The Monsieur Sabathier who procured your appointment for you?"—

"The same! and the more kindly, that our political opinions differ—if, indeed, he have an opinion; for he has been in office these thirty years, and was the right hand of Mon-

sieur Martignac, after having been a favourite of Monsieur Villèle."

"Such a man ought to have more opinions than one!" said Adrienne, laughing.

"You are severe."

"No! Monsieur Sabathier is your patron, and as such, must be respected, in spite of his withered face and malicious looks. The place he has been the means of procuring you, brings in three thousand francs per annum, which make an important figure in our budget. Without it, what would become of us! It is precisely those three thousand francs that will enable us to live comfortably."

"With true affection, one always lives comfortably," observed the more sentimental Adolphe.

"Love in a cottage!" said the young widow, with a smile. "Spendthrift! it becomes *you* to talk so! I am well acquainted with your follies. You are ruining yourself in furnishing your bachelor's apartment in the Rue Gaillon."

"Where, in three months, I trust we shall be living together!" added Adolphe.

"I have heard of your silk hangings and inlaid furniture—your bronzes, porcelain, and pictures. Is that what you call a cottage? Well, well! it is time I should take the reins of government into my hands. I almost think I had better assume them before our wedding-day."

"Are you not already my guide and ruler?—What are your commands?"

"In the first place, a financial measure which will disgust you;—that you pay no bills before I have examined them. You allow yourself to be robbed without remonstrance."

"I see you will not allow me the privilege of surprising you!"

"Surprise me by being reasonable; and since I am in a scolding humour, listen to a word more. You have been seen running from jeweller to jeweller!—Take notice that, with the exception of a plain gold wedding-ring, I will

accept nothing in the way of ornament. I have a few diamonds; when we are rich, you shall give me more; till then—nothing! Disobey me not, or I shall be seriously offended. I am young and pretty enough, I flatter myself, to want nothing but flowers."

"Till I knew you, dearest Adrienne, I never desired to be rich," said he, in a melancholy tone.

"Just now, you were talking of cottages," said she, "and now, you are dreaming of palaces!"

"Is it not cruel to possess nothing worthy of you?"

"I thought you possessed a heart"—whispered Adrienne, looking tenderly towards him.

While thus conversing together, they arrived at the Belvidere. The east wind was blowing with the usual equinoxial violence; and Adrienne, shivering in her shawl, seized the arm of her future husband with childish impetu-

osity, exclaiming—" I am dying with cold;—let us run down the hill!"—

They rushed, accordingly, down the spiral paths, bordered with lilacs; and urged by the rapid declivity of the ground, descended from top to bottom in joyous mirth, unable to check themselves; when lo! they suddenly found themselves in collision with a group of people about to ascend the mount. It was composed of several women, whose air and dress were somewhat provincial, escorted by two youths, of twelve or thirteen, attired in jackets; and both the ladies and boys seemed to acknowledge the authority of one of the party differing, in all points, from themselves.

It was a woman of about eight-and-thirty, of regular beauty, but tall and stately, carrying her head haughtily. Her black satin pelisse, trimmed with chinchilla, displayed a figure which, though distinguished, was not free from stiffness; while her velvet hat, with its plumes floating in the wind, sat upon her head

as superbly as Minerva's helmet on the forehead of the goddess.

This woman, whose fierce and haughty eye announced far greater self-esteem than sympathy for her fellow creatures, seemed born to wear the ruff and farthingale of former times. In witnessing her majestic bearing, and the studied calculation of her most insignificant gestures, one might have imagined a tragedy queen or high priestess of the opera, retaining her theatrical solemnity of the stage in private life. But upon closer inspection, such a supposition appeared inapplicable to her severe and rigid physiognomy.

On finding herself all but in the arms of this imposing-looking person, the young woman suddenly halted, with the nervous impatience of an Arab courser. Blushing to the eyes, she dropped the arm of Adolphe, and making a violent effort to smile,—"What a surprise, Madam, to meet you here!" said she, in a faltering voice.

To avoid the threatened collision, the haughty stranger had retired a few paces, with her hands defensively held out. Instead of answering, she cast a deliberate glance upon Adrienne, which she next transferred to the features of the young man, who was unknown to her; then, contracting her lips and brows as if beholding some hideous monster, she turned away her head, and pursued her way—a movement scrupulously imitated by those who accompanied her.—As they departed, Adolphe replaced his hat on his head.

"You seem to have recognised some provincial bores?"—said he, leaning towards his beloved. "But what ails you?—You are confused and trembling!"—

"Come, dear Adolphe, come!—they are returning," replied the young widow, stepping out hastily, as if to avoid being seen a second time by the group, whose ironical chatterings already reached her ears.

"Oh! how she looked at me, Adolphe! Did you observe her?"—

"Does she know you, then?" exclaimed her admirer, impetuously. "Why when you spoke, she was rude enough neither to answer nor return your bow!—And to think that there is nobody with her whom I can chastise for her impertinence!"—

Involuntarily, he brandished his cane, as if he held a sword in his hand; but on perceiving only two jacketed youths upon whom to exercise his indignation, he shrugged his shoulders in contempt.

"What is the woman's name?"—he contemtuously inquired. "I have seen her either at the Opera, or at Franconi's, amongst the figurantes."

In spite of this scornful allusion, Adrienne continued to muse in thoughtful silence.

"What is the matter, dearest?" inquired her admirer, assuming a kinder tone. "What

have I done? —Am *I* accountable for the impertinence of that hateful woman?—Speak to me—speak, dear Adrienne!"

"I am not angry," said she, offering her hand; "but you have made me wretched!"

"Wretched!—*I?*"—

"Yes, *you!* How right I was to refuse to go out this morning!—But how was I to persevere when you persisted? I knew this walk would end unfortunately! Thanks to this adventure, I shall become the theme of a merciless, scandalous, and intolerant côterie. A mere trifle will be construed into an act of indecorum. I see from hence the sneers and looks of those of whom you have just now had a specimen!"

"Because an ugly old woman chooses to be impertinent, you fancy the universe in league agai nst you!"

"She is not old, being only forty; and her beauty is beyond dispute. You would fain flatter my indignation—but you are wrong.

I am not blind; and were she hideous, and a great-grandmother, her influence in the world would not be the less important."

"Who is she, then?—One would imagine her the Dauphiness, by the importance you assign her!"

"It is the Countess de Chantevilliers!—The question could only issue from the courts of law, or the Faubourg St. Jacques!" replied the pretty widow. "Did you oftener emerge into our circle, I should not be obliged to explain to you the value of a name you now hold so cheap. The Countess de Chantevilliers is the woman, like Bayard, *sans peur et sans reproche*—an immaculate angel, who soars superior to human frailties; the queen of all the drawing-rooms she deigns to honour with her presence; the arbitress of taste, talent, and reputation; in fact, the Virtue in fashion!"—

"Because to be virtuous happens, just now, to be fashionable at court," observed Adolphe, smiling.

" Her enemies (and who is without them?) pronounce her, it is true, addicted to scandal, disdainful, and selfish. She is accused of a severity towards others, exceeded only by her own self-indulgence. Could she kneel in adoration of her perfections, they say she would become a double devotee. But these minor failings are, to a certain degree, supportable; for she is really so superior to most of us, that she has the right to assert her pre-eminence.—I need not tell you that she holds all men in contempt, and most women.—You have seen "*La Vestale?*"—It is Madame de Chantevilliers who acts the high priestess, and throws the black veil over the heads of those convicted of imprudence. A phrase, a word from *her*, and a lapse of mere decorum insures one's being buried alive like Julia. I am persuaded, that she is already preparing my obsequies!" continued the young widow. " From our being together, she will deduce the most absurd inferences. But I will not await the fatal

sentence. I will proceed to her without delay, and explain that you are about to become my husband."

"How! you would enter that woman's house, after such insolence?" exclaimed Adolphe, involuntarily. "You would do no good, Adrienne; and, since in your eyes I have now a husband's influence, let me entreat you to disregard the malice of this Madame de Chantevilliers. In three months, you will be Madame Dauriac. Despise, therefore, the strictures of the chattering old gossip, (for your immaculate angel is nothing else!) and promise me not to humiliate yourself by such a visit."

"I cannot promise, dear Adolphe. I will not subject myself to vexation so easily avoided by a mere explanation. Why make an enemy of so formidable a personage?"—

"But she insulted you?"—

"Because appearances were against me;—a reason the more for clearing up the error. Besides, the other day, she sent me an invita-

tion for a ball; and though my mourning prevents my availing myself of it, I owe her a visit."

In this discussion, each adhered to their original opinion. Before it ended, they found themselves arrived at the apartment of Madame de Versan, in the Rue Taranne. Adolphe Dauriac remained there the greater part of the afternoon, according to his custom; when lo! just as he was retiring, a strange servant was ushered into the room by the female attendant of the young widow.

"Do you wish to speak to me?" inquired Adrienne, much agitated on perceiving the livery of Madame de Chantevilliers.

"It is about a letter, Madam," stammered the footman, evidently distressed; "a letter I brought some days ago—an invitation to a ball. —I suppose there was an error, for my mistress wishes to have it back again."

Adrienne rose, and taking the letter from her desk, gave it, without observation, to the servant.

"And *now* do you mean to visit her?"—inquired Dauriac, trembling with rage, when they were again alone. Then, after jumping from his seat, and impatiently pacing the room, he suddenly stood before Adrienne.

"Has that woman a husband?"—said he.

"Certainly," replied Madame de Versan.

"What age is he?"—

"Sixty, I believe."

"I thought so—an old man! This morning it was boys, and now a lackey! But this woman must surely have others about her—a brother—a friend—an admirer—some one who is accountable for the insolence of her pretensions?" Furious with indignation, he gesticulated with his hand in so menacing an attitude, as nearly to demolish the clock upon the chimney piece.

The warmth with which he was disposed to resent the affront to his beloved, seemed to appease her more than any mere form of consolation.

"Compose yourself, dearest," said she, forcing him into a chair. "The injury is not of a nature to be resented sword in hand;—our marriage is the best answer to all calumnious suppositions. For I need not deceive myself! The Countess will not stop at the truth.—What my offence to her, I cannot imagine."

"Look at yourself in the glass, Adrienne, and you will know."

"A compliment and not a reason! Besides she is better looking than I am, and fully aware of it. No! her conduct, in this instance, is not the result of a personal pique; but arises from the rigidity of her principles.—These strait-laced women have neither pity nor generosity. To act upon a mere surmise—to believe in appearances rather than the attestation of my whole life!—to condemn me without a hearing, an inquiry—to treat me with such gratuitous brutality! For she is aware that my mourning would prevent my going to the ball; and all

for the mere pleasure of insulting me! For she has now shut her doors upon me, Adolphe!"

Madame de Versan, who had been looking towards her admirer, suddenly turned away her head, to conceal her tears of indignation. When Adolphe perceived them, his rage became ungovernable.

"She has made you weep, Adrienne, and I swear to you, she shall weep in her turn!" cried he. "It is for me to avenge you, and avenged you shall be! You told me just now that she had an aged husband.—What is he?—What is position in the world?"

"What signifies his position?"

"Answer me, I beg of you?—Do they reside in Paris?—Chantevilliers!—Surely the name is familiar to me!"—

"In the journals, perhaps—Monsieur de Chantevilliers is a deputy."

"A deputy?—good! He does not belong to the left, for I know them all."

"He belongs to the centre," said the young widow. "Every thing that is most centre under Decazes and Monsieur de Villèle; and he will most likely see out Monsieur de Martignac. It is all one to him. He attaches himself to the administration, not the ministers. In fact, he is a pattern of a deputy. Never in his life has he soiled his fingers with a black ball."

"What is his department?"—

"Bordeaux, where he is President of the Royal court.—But he generally inhabits Paris, where, being rich, he keeps open house."

"From Bordeaux!"—exclaimed Dauriac. "Enough! the rest depends upon me. I know a person who will give me every information upon the subject. To-morrow, I will ascertain whether this irreproachable lady be as invulnerable as you pronounce her. With regard to angels, Adrienne, I have only faith in *you!* Upon looking closer, I may probably detect a

MODERN

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BY MRS. GORE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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MODERN FRENCH LIFE.

CHAPTER II.

INTENT upon his project of vengeance, the future husband of Madame de Versan took a hasty dinner at his café, and then proceeded to the Rue Courty. This spot, with which my readers are probably unfamiliar, is a mean-looking narrow street, in which a student would barely condescend to lodge, but much frequented by the deputies from the provinces; its vicinity to the Chamber and probably the moderate charges of the hotels, being the cause of this distinguished preference. It was there that Monsieur Groscassand (de la Gironde) had taken up his quarters for the session, which had been open about two months. In

addition to a small room without a fire-place, which they had the pretension to call a bed-room, the apartment of the honourable deputy, was composed of a larger room, which served for his study, drawing-room and dining-room. A tattered carpet sparingly covered the brick floor, while old fashioned arm-chairs were ranged along the wall. Upon the chimney-piece, was a clock surmounted with a crouching Venus, a somewhat anacreontic subject for the lodging of a national advocate, and the busts of Voltaire and Rousseau, who, from their opposite pedestals, seemed complacently smiling at each other. Such were the principal objects ornamenting the apartment.

When Adolphe entered, several persons were assembled, waiting the return of the honourable member from a prolonged debate. Accustomed to the ways of the house, the young man took up his station before the fire-place, without noticing the individuals pre-

sent, whose faces were strange to him; poked up the fire, and sitting down close by the lamp, took up the *Constitutionnel* and read—he knew not what, the face of the Countess de Chantevilliers intruding itself between the paper and him. His fit of thoughtfulness lasted some time, favoured by the strict silence which all present thought proper to observe. At length, a noise from without put an end to the general impatience. With the exception of Adolphe, every one rose as the door moved, when the deputy entered, followed by two law students, who seemed to act as his aides-de-camp.

Monsieur Groscassand (de la Gironde,) was a tall stout man, about forty years of age, who, at first sight seemed fitter for the struggles of the arena, than those of the tribune. His herculean shoulders and full development of his person, announced unusual vigor of body; commanding more attention than his features, which, though common, dis-

played some signs of intelligence and capacity. His small eyes, full of fire, sparkled under his short bushy eye-brows; his long and high coloured face, was shaded by dark-brown frizzled hair; while on the crown of his head, was a denuded circle, as neatly described as a monastic tonsure. To complete the description of the person by that of the costume, the deputy of the left side wore a customary suit of solemn black; for we must not forget to mention, that Monsieur Groscassand (de la Gironde,) was a lawyer.

The deputy from Bordeaux traversed his small drawing-room with forensic dignity; offering his hand, without uncovering himself, to those who awaited him. He then proceeded into his bed-room, from whence he quickly issued, his head bare, and attired in a plaid dressing-gown. Thus arrayed in the ease of domestic life, he stood against the mantle piece, his hands crossed behind him; and addressed his assembled friends in a senatorial tone.

"Well, gentlemen," said he, "our debate was a warm one! I thought the amendment would have passed. One hundred and eighty-two in favour, and one hundred and ninety-two against. A majority of ten, not one more. —If we gain only five, the Portalis project will be upset,—a most deplorable project, to make use of the terms of our addresses. For my part, I do not conceal it, I prefer the Peyronnet measure, a measure of "*justice and love*," which had at all events the merit of sincerity. Ah, Dauriac! good evening! Were you at the chamber?—I mentioned to you yesterday my intention of speaking, but I gave the precedence to Casimir Perier.—It will be for to-morrow. Your business, Sir?" continued the deputy, addressing a young man dressed in black, who stood at his right craning with his mouth wide open.

"Sir," replied he, "producing a letter the size of a ministerial dispatch, "this is from my father, Monsieur Chaumenu, a householder at

Bordeaux; one of the electors who had the honour of naming you."

"Humph!" said the deputy, knitting his ample eye-brows, and opening the formidable letter, with a deliberation announcing complete indifference to its contents.—"Humph!" exclaimed he, reading it at a glance, "a place! Your father solicits a place for you,—reminding me that I had his suffrage at the last election. It was indeed, a mark of esteem, a signal honour he did me; and pray tell him, that I never can forget it. But as to patronage, Sir, I have none, and as these gentlemen can attest. It is not on the benches of the left side, that the honours of office are lavished. If we upset the ministry, perhaps my influence may be greater; and be assured that the son of my worthy constituent Monsieur Boismenu"—

"Chaumenu!" amended the young Gascon.

"The son of Monsieur Chaumenu, may be sure that he is the first on my list."

An inclination of the head implied to the youth that his audience was finished; and bowing low to the representative of his native city, he accordingly departed.

"And you, gentlemen; do you come to solicit places?"—said Monsieur Groscassand, (de la Gironde,) surveying with a peculiar smile, the circle around him.

"As to me, Sir, I will not detain you long," replied a diminutive little man, in a wig. "I am a physician at Blaye, and in that capacity am charged with a petition from the faculty, against the remedies and dispensations of the Sisters of charity.

"Good! I undertake it," said the deputy laying the paper on his bureau. "But have you no petitions against the Jesuits? We have some idea of giving an admonition to the reverend fathers, and a few well managed petitions might produce good effect."

"Doubtless Sir!" replied the little man, in a wig. "It is easy enough, and I will set about it immediately."

"Sir," said another, opening a wide portfolio, "this is the subscription to the political, religious, historical letters of Lemaire, two volumes 8vo., price fifteen francs. All the principal members of our party have subscribed to it. Monsieur Benjamin Constant, Monsieur Perier,—M——."

"Are you going to recite the whole litany of the left side?" interrupted Groscassand, snatching up the book in which he inscribed his name. "It is thus I am pillaged, day after day, in the name of the good cause!—"

"Two full volumes, Sir," said the clerk, "and a magnificent edition!"

"Good! my constituents will have to fish back the fifteen francs, I have thrown into the water," said Groscassand.

A waiter now opened the door and brought in a small table, upon which was a dinner ready served; at the sight of which, the deputy was doubly gratified; for he was both hungry and tired of his visitors.

"A thousand pardons, gentlemen," said he, placing himself at the table. "But a deputy of the opposition is not punctilious as to etiquette. Besides, I am a rustic. As Beranger sings: "my grand-father was a ploughman, and I am proud of it." I do not dine with ministers, and my repast is too modest for me to beg you to share it. Excuse the want of ceremony. I must work after dinner; for I have to speak to-morrow, upon an important question—the liberty of the press. You may imagine, that I am engrossed by the subject. Adieu, gentlemen. Dauriac, stay! —A word with you."

The intruders having departed, Monsieur Groscassand emitted a sigh of satisfaction, and attacked the soup.

"Well, my dear fellow, *quid novi?*" inquired the deputy, taking a glass of wine. "I had something to say to you. Ah! I remember! Last year, after the withdrawal of the law upon the press, the students of the schools

proceeded in a body to the several deputies: Sebastiani, Royer Collard, Benjamin Constant, &c. I do not admire the system of public demonstrations—a mere imitation of England —and you know I am a pure Girondin. Still, if we upset the Portalis motion, and these processions are renewed, it might be as well if they came to me. The idea is not suggested by stupid vanity; but I have been in the van since the commencement of the session; and to-morrow shall make another desperate effort. I am to be strongly supported. Foy and Manuel are dead, and we want new names to replace them. When I look around me, I see no very formidable opponents. You have many friends in the schools of law, and can manage it so that it will not appear extraordinary."

"Rely upon me," said Adolphe. "But, for this evening, a truce to politics, for I have some particulars to ask you on a subject which much concerns me."

"Speak on,—I am listening!"

"Who is Monsieur de Chantevilliers?"—

"A president of Bordeaux, who never quits Paris, at which our bar is enchanted," replied the Deputy. "Chantevilliers is an official ass, but a good fellow in the main."

"And his wife?"—inquired Adolphe.

"His wife?"—resumed the deputy, holding his fork suspended over his plate. "His wife, is of a different calibre.—His wife is a knowing one!"

"A knowing one?" exclaimed Dauriac. "I have heard her described as a superior being."

"Of course. All knowing ones are so described. But with what views, do you make these inquiries? Are you in love with Madame de Chantevilliers?"—

"Supposing I were?" said Adolphe, cautiously.

"In that case, I have only to add *beware!* Many, as wary as you, have singed their wings at the same torch."

"Yourself, perhaps?" said Adolphe, observing the significant smile of his friend.

"I don't say no!" replied the deputy, in a graver tone.

"At the risk of being thought impertinent, I entreat you, to explain yourself."

"My dear friend, you shew me your cards," replied the deputy. "You are in love with Madame de Chantevilliers. You have been informed that I myself was formerly her admirer, and want to turn my experience to good account. Your plan is well conceived, but ill-executed."

"You were in love with her then?" replied Adolphe.

"Why should I make a mystery of what was notorious to all Bordeaux? It was twelve years ago, in 1816, when she was twenty-five, and beautiful. Not a woman at court comparable with her! She had even then her present queen-like bearing, but with more grace and lightness. She is now grown fat; an objection

ill-becoming *me*, you will say, for I alas! have not grown thin,—though unrequited love passes for a dessicative."

"Your passion then, was unrequited?" inquired Dauriac, with extreme anxiety.

"It was! I need not tell you that the wound is now healed; but at the time, I was tempted to throw myself into the Gironde.—Fortunately, I thought better of it."

"Did she prefer another?"

"Another?" exclaimed Monsieur de Groscassand. "Nobody in the world, my dear fellow! Several had been at her feet before me; several were there afterwards. But not one can boast of having achieved the least advantage."

"Then, after all, she is a paragon of virtue!"—said Adolphe, disappointed in his inquiries.

"You may well say so, since she resisted *me!*"

"She has led a spotless life, I fear," faltered Adolphe.

"As unsunned snow!" said the deputy, with a sardonic smile; "a heart as cold as her reputation is pure. You have before you, my dear fellow, an enterprise worthy your ambition!"

"Such obstacles must have been made for me!" thought Adolphe, in despair. "Where am I to find the vulnerable heel of this piece of perfection!"

These allusions to the days of his love had no influence on the appetite of Monsieur Groscassand, who, having dined largely, rose from the table.

"Well?—How have you determined your public career?" asked he, of his young friend. "Do you keep your terms?—Are you still for the bar?—Am I to speak to Lafitte and Perier?"—

"Thank you," said Adolphe, "I am already provided for."

"A place?—of what nature?"—inquired the deputy.

"In the home department."

"A place under government!" cried the deputy, in his gruffest voice. "You, Dauriac, —you, that I esteem and call my friend!—It is impossible!—You are jesting."—

"Not the least, I assure you," replied Adolphe, surprised at this invective. "You know I have but little fortune."

"Work then!" said the colleague of Benjamin Constant.

"It is precisely for that purpose I solicited employment."

"Under government? absurd! When I said 'work,' I alluded to your profession,—the bar, —which is an honourable and independent calling, of which the result, if successful, is most positive. I, for instance, make thirty thousand francs per annum, at the Bordeaux bar. At Paris it would be doubled."

"But consider that your position is made, and that mine is to make. You have abilities, —have I?—Lastly, you are settled at Bor-

deaux, I at Paris. Have you reflected upon the number of competitors here, and how many I must trample down before I can succeed."

"Well then, there is commerce! I offered to interest myself for you, with their financial highnesses."

"Dependence for dependence, I prefer the service of my country," said Adolphe.

"Your country! There I have you!" exclaimed the deputy, as eagerly as if he had been at the tribune;—"and what do you call your country? Is it the government or the nation, pray?—The ministry or thirty millions of Frenchmen, who are not in place?—I know many self-styled liberals, who have no scruple in accepting places under government; nay, who are the most inveterate of place hunters; that Boimenu, or Chaumenu to wit, who, after having figured in the republican camp, sends me his idiot son to get him employed as valet to Charles X. It is not for you to

follow the example of such miscreants, my young friend! At that rate, you will soon forfeit all that is most precious in the world—the esteem of others and your own. Betwixt Rome and Carthage, you must decide. If you accept a government patronage, become at once its vassal,—its serf!—Such is your duty, since it supports you. But in that case, how dare you shew your face among us, where we have already too many double-faced and deceitful adherents?—What will your intimate friends think of you? Even that which your enemies will say aloud—'There goes Dauriac who has sold himself to the crown!'"

In uttering this, Monsieur Groscassand raised his right hand to the level of his left eye, and made a terrific diagonal cut, happily only striking the air in illustration of his eloquence.

"Sold?—Never!" cried Dauriac, raising both arms with an equally energetic gesticulation.

"It will be said, it will be believed, and with justice. Appearances will condemn you. Too lucky, if you do not hear whistle past your ear the murderous balls of 'spy,'—'traitor!'"—

"Sir," said Adolphe, gravely, "he, who dared pronounce them in my hearing, would hazard the forfeiture of his life."

"Young man," replied the deputy of Bordeaux, in a stern voice, "I am accustomed to speak the truth to all—friends as well as foes. I behold you on the brink of a precipice, and must point it out to you, since you are too blind to see it."

"I am not quite so selfish as you seem to think," replied Adolphe, with a bitter smile. "I have been poor and can be so again, though I have good reasons for wishing to be otherwise. If I would believe that holding this place could bring a doubt upon the integrity of my opinions, I would resign it to-morrow!"

"*To-night* if possible. Never defer a good resolution."

"Do you conscientiously and seriously advise me thus? Remember, it is not I alone who am concerned!—I am about to be married!"

"Were you my brother, I would not advise you otherwise," said the member of the extreme left.

"Adieu!" replied Adolphe, "I leave you,—for it is late. But I will soon prove to you the integrity of my soul, in a question of honour."

The two gentlemen shook hands. Adolphe retired; and while pursuing his way homewards, was absorbed by meditations far from satisfactory.

"A sorry day's work!" said he, as he reentered his apartment. "A thousand crowns per annum sacrificed! For my mind is made up. Betwixt honour and interest, one cannot hesitate. Groscassand is a man of the ancient

stamp, and ought to have been born a Spartan. He is disagreeably frank, it is true; but with such upright prin[illegible] man has a right to be an austere ju[illegible]m beginning to be out of conceit of [illegible]rried to fanaticism. By what fatality is [illegible]n one of the darkest days of my life, [illegible]n fated to encounter two such phœnixe[illegible]eproachable woman, and an incorruptib[illegible]ian!"—

CHAPTER III.

A RESTLESS night confirmed Dauriac in his resolution of sacrificing his place to the esteem of his friend the popular member; as well as of chastising the arrogance of the Countess, even if, to reach this model of supernatural perfection, he were to follow her to the skies, as Diomed formerly attacked the divinities of Olympus.

The first of these projects being the easiest to accomplish, the admirer of Madame de Versan decided to proceed with it, before he even saw the object of his affections, whose remonstrances he had most to dread.

After breakfast, therefore, he hastened, to the ministry of the home department, and

gained admittance without difficulty ;—his well known face enjoying the prerogative of the intimates of the house; and proceeded straight to the cabinet of Monsieur Sabathier, the door of which, was immediately opened by a servant in the ministerial livery.

The sanctuary of office offered the cold and cheerless aspect peculiar to the haunts of the pen-ocracy. The shelves round the room were loaded with green-paper-boxes ; and in the centre was a heavy table, covered with a green-cloth. Here and there, a few mahogany chairs completed the furniture; of which the leading feature was a plaster bust of Charles X., placed upon a pedestal, which had been previously honoured by the head of Napoleon, and was awaiting that of Louis Philippe.

At the angle of the chimney-piece, stood a bureau covered with documents; before which, sat Monsieur Sabathier in one of those low-backed chairs which do not permit the indulgence of lounging; and are therefore preferred

by diligent men of business. A wolf skin was spread under a table surrounded by a screen; in the centre of which, sat the principal clerk, like a saint in a niche, announcing the selfish care which man bestows upon his accustomed haunt. With this single exception, an anchorite might have approved the simplicity of the administrative cell.

On hearing the door open, Monsieur Sabathier raised his head, which he lowered upon seeing Adolphe; continuing the reading of the document he held in hand, and from the effect of custom, as many as six lines at a time. Habituated to official receptions, Dauriac waited patiently the notice of his protector. Having finished his task and made certain marginal annotations, replaced the memorial in his bureau, and lifted his spectacles upon his bald forehead, with an ironical smile, he fixed his eyes upon the young man.

"Do you know, Dauriac," said he, "that, were we still under the dominion of the high church party, your nomination would, in all

probability, be cancelled? — Certain tender walks may be very delightful! but you should wait till the trees have leaves in the Jardin des Plantes. At this season of the year, it is difficult to conceal oneself."

"I was sure I should be reprimanded," said Adolphe, smiling.

"Envied, you should say," replied the old man gaily. "Though you have little discretion, you have excellent taste;—she is a charming little woman!"

"Who will be Madame Dauriac before three months have elapsed."

"In that case, book me for the wedding. I mean to dance with the bride. I had my misgivings. Forgive me, my good friend! Appearances rather warranted it. Between you and I, it is not customary to walk *tête à tête* with the lady one is about to marry; and decorum before every thing!"

"I am aware of it, Sir, and have already repented my imprudence."

"You do well to marry," said Monsieur Saba-

thier. "I had already given you that advice. With a wife and a place, it is difficult to diverge from the right road. As to your place, it is a settled thing, and you may enter upon your functions as soon as you like. The head of your department is to be with me this morning, and I will present you to him. Remain here, therefore. He is a worthy man with whom you will agree very well."

"Sir," replied the young man, somewhat embarrassed, "I know not how to testify my gratitude for the interest you deign to manifest in my behalf. I would willingly owe my position to you, the oldest friend of my father;—but—I trust you will not ascribe to any feeling of ingratitude, my inability to avail myself of your kind offices."

"What means all this?" cried the official, hastily raising his spectacles. "You will not accept the place?"

"I am compelled to refuse it," said Adolphe.

"And for what reason, pray? Have you a chance of a better?"

"No, indeed!"

"You have inherited a fortune, then?"

"No, Sir!"

"You are going to marry a rich wife?"

"No richer than myself!"

"A prize in the lottery, then?"

"No, Sir, my position is just as it was."

"In that case, can you or will you account for this sudden change in your projects?" inquired the official, fixing the young man steadily.

"You are acquainted with my opinions, Sir. They are such as forbid my accepting a favour from a party with whom I feel but little sympathy."

"Your opinions!" said the old man, shrugging his shoulders. "Yesterday, they allowed you to serve the government—to-day they forbid you! Whence this change, in four and twenty hours Such a determination does

not proceed from you alone. I feel convinced that some other influence has suggested it! Listen to me, Dauriac! Like your father, you are hot headed, and I will be as little sparing towards you, as towards him. What means this folly?—Your whole fortune consists of four thousand francs per annum, and you refuse an employment which would double your income; ay, at the very moment of your marriage! This is madness!—answer me frankly—who have you seen since yesterday?"

"I need no one to suggest to me that which I consider my duty," replied Adolphe, sententiously.

"A phrase worthy of a Spartan. But remember, this is Paris! Once more, *whose* advice do you follow?—Not your wife's, I am certain!—Women are more reasonable!"

"On such questions, one consults one's political friends, and not one's wife."

"And one generally repents it! But quit

these generalities, and name to me, if you dare, one of your political friends who forbids you serving the state?"

"And why not?" said Adolphe, hastily.

"Name them, then!" replied the obstinate old man.

"I will name you *one*," replied Dauriac, who would have been puzzled to find another; "and the name I am about to pronounce, gives some weight to the advice I follow."

"It is Epictetus then, or Socrates!"

"It is Groscassand (de la Gironde)!" said Dauriac, gravely.

"The deputy of the left?" inquired Monsieur Sabathier, retaining on his thin colourless lips, one of those silent sneers, that form one of the characteristic of Cooper's Leather stocking.

"There are not two of that name in Paris, I fancy," said Adolphe, with much consequence.

The official rose, and passing into an adjoining room, and opening a bureau, took out a paper which he read; then replacing it, locked up the bureau, and returned to his seat in the arm chair.

"You need not consult your black-book!" said Adolphe, affecting to laugh. "Groscassand is of the old stamp and incorruptible. He is of virgin gold, and the man must be clever who can detect in him the least alloy. Throughout his political career, he has resisted all temptations with supreme contempt. It is notorious, that he refused the cross of the legion of honour, as well as a counsellorship at the royal court at Bordeaux."

The venerable official listened to these words with attention; and took a silent pinch of snuff.

"My dear friend," said he, at length, "how old are you?—Twenty-four, I believe?"

"I am five and twenty," said Adolphe.

"Then allow me to say, that you are very

young of your age. You would do well to be more deliberate in your judgment of men and things. He who, like you, has his way to make, should eschew the errors of optimism. There is something childish in your enthusiastic admiration of Monsieur Groscassand. Learn, in the first place, that no one refuses the cross of the legion of honour, as it is only granted to those who solicit it; so that the pretension of your friend is a mere boast."

"It was not he who told it to me."

"As to the counsellorship at Bordeaux, he might have had it, and took no further steps for that purpose. But what does that prove? That Monsieur Groscassand prefers the emoluments of the bar, which bring him in thirty thousand francs per annum, to the honourable appointment which only produces three thousand. A mere heroism of arithmetic! To judge from the attitude he takes in the chamber, on the most trifling occasions, his ambition is far more aspiring. The suc-

cessor to Foy and Manuel, (I believe that is the title allotted him?) intends to be an attorney-general, or president, and that, after a single session! Next year if his party prosper, nothing will satisfy him short of the robe of the keeper of the seals."

"Allow me to interrupt you," exclaimed Dauriac, eagerly. "You entertain the most unfounded prejudices against Groscassand. He is not to be bought, and I will stake my head upon his honour."

"Your head is at present firm upon your shoulders;—be cautious in risking it. Ex-professionally, Groscassand is rich, and independent. A high position in his own country, a leading member of the chamber, what distinction can he want more?

"I repeat to you, he is of the right metal, and superior to all temptations."

"Except those of vanity."

"You do not believe then, in his disinterestedness?" inquired Dauriac, eagerly.

Monsieur Sabathier took up the tongs and methodically turned over a burning log that was lying on the hearth.

"What would you say," inquired he, "if your distinguished friend, before the close of the session, were turned over from the left side to the right, as is the case with the log I have this moment removed."

"Impossible!" exclaimed Adolphe.

"Listen!" said the official. "You may imagine that we shall not long be burthened with the place you have so disdainfully rejected. I have upon my list sixty candidates for it, all panting for the nomination. But from consideration for your father, as well as friendship, I will not accept your negociation. I allow you a fortnight's reflection. Before then, (who knows?) you may chance to see your incorruptible deputy, voting with ministers."

"In that case, make me a clerk in your office, and I swear to accept the appointment."

"That would not suit the views of Jacquart," replied Monsieur Sabathier, turning his head

towards an individual, who had just entered the room. "What is the matter, Jacquart?"

The messenger came up, and whispered something in the ear of the official, inaudible to Adolphe.

"Shew the lady up," said the old man. "I was pretty sure she would come to-day."

The messenger departed, and Dauriac was about to follow; when the old gentleman made him a mysterious sign to stay.

"I am certain," said Sabathier, "you are recurring to my malicious observations of yesterday. But you are mistaken. At my age, one may receive the most charming angel with perfect propriety. Are you discreet?"

"As the grave!" replied the admirer of Monsieur Groscassand.

"In that case, go into that room!" said Monsieur Sabathier, pointing to the inner chamber, which he had himself previously entered.—"Above all, not a word—not a syllable!"—

Dauriac obeyed, and just in time; for the door again opened, and he had a glimpse of a lady of distinguished appearance, whose dress presented the most exquisite simplicity of a morning *négligé*. His curiosity was changed into astonishment, on perceiving that this interesting female was neither more nor less than the object of his detestation, Madame la Comtesse de Chantevilliers !—

" What has the dragon of virtue to do in the earth of this wary old fox?" thought he. " Is this according to the strict laws of decorum?"—

Such was the first inquiry, which the ex-placeman addressed to himself; and, in spite of his much vaunted discretion, his ear was quickly applied to the door.

CHAPTER IV.

Monsieur Sabathier advanced politely towards the Countess, who with unusual familiarity, took the deserted chair of Adolphe, refusing the post of honour.

"No, no!" cried she, urging the official to resume his seat. "No ceremony with me, or I will not repeat my visit. You must have known that I could not pass your office without coming in to scold you?"

"What is my offence, Madam?" asked the old man, courteously. "Believe me, I can reproach myself with nothing."

"Is it nothing then, to neglect your friends so cruelly? Do you not know I am at home on Wednesdays; that my house has been open

this month past, and that you have not set your foot there yet. Is not all this too bad?"

"I go so little into the world!"

"But surely, your friends have a claim! No, no! You cannot succeed in excusing yourself; and the only way to obtain your pardon, is to promise to come the day after to-morrow. I have a ball. You have no doubt received an invitation; but I come in person, in order that there may be no excuse for a refusal."

"I am overcome by such unmerited honour; but I have not danced these thirty years."

"Who dances now? You will be amused without dancing. I shall have a multitude of peers, and several ambassadors. I hold much to making my circle select. I weeded it only yesterday."

"Weeded it!" repeated Dauriac, faintly. "She calls her insolence to Adrienne, weed-

ing! Immaculate angel! let me only catch you tripping!"

"I am thought severe, and exclusive," continued the Countess. "But let the world have its say!—A woman cannot be too particular in the choice of her acquaintances, and I never could understand the tolerance of ladies who transform their houses into caravanserais. I confess, I do not like new faces. Nevertheless, my dear Chevalier, if you have any presentable young men in your department who are fond of dancing, I shall be delighted to see them."

The man in office, eyeing the luckless ribbon which had brought down upon him this feudal distinction, replied with an ironical smile, "Alas! Madam, I am no longer misled by the vanities of youth, and however flattering your intentions, am not to be deluded. I cannot suppose you have sought me in my office, for the purpose of recruiting a dancer

of my age; it is said, that the real object of women's letters, lies in the postscript."

"And you wish to know the postcript of my visit?" interrupted Madame de Chantevilliers, with the most unblushing coolness. "Am I to understand that you find me importunate, and wish me to go? But with *you* I can never be angry! Besides, I know the value of your time. Well then, my dear Monsieur Sabathier, with your usual penetration, your supposition is just. My visit is *not* disinterested; I am come to tease and torment you about our important affair."

"You are at least consistent!" replied the old man.

"Do not laugh at me, for the matter is serious. A creation of peers is to take place before the end of the session. You will not allow it, in your ministerial circles; but I know it from the best authority. Remember I fell ill after the ordonnance of the 5th of November,

in which the name of Monsieur de Chantevilliers was omitted, in spite of all the promises which had been made me; and if *this* time he be not made a peer, I shall not only be ill, but *die!*—Do you wish me to fall a victim to disappointment?"—

The irreproachable Countess, who had reached her eight and thirtieth year, uttered these last words in a faint voice and with languishing eyes, with the determined coquetry of a woman of five and twenty.

"So!" thought Dauriac, "these miracles of decorum are tolerably well versed, I see, in the manœuvres of their sex!" And he half opened the door the better to observe.

"The King appreciates Monsieur de Chantevilliers," said the high born lady; "and I feel convinced would name him with pleasure. Monsieur de Martignac is also disposed in his favour. But I need not remind you, that a King's memory and minister's promise, my dear Chevalier, are fragile things. I rely,

therefore, only upon you! The nominations are in your hands, and you alone can support the name of my husband."

"To support his name it must be on the list!" said the imperturbable man in office.

"Is it not so, then?" exclaimed the Countess; "I guessed as much! Yet, surely if any one have a better claim to that distinction than another, it is Monsieur de Chantevilliers, he being one of the first families of Guienne, (I do not allude to mine.) His fortune is considerable. The post he occupies at Bordeaux, at the council-general—his solid principles, his firm devotion, and faithful services—place him in such a peculiar position, that in soliciting a peerage, he asserts a right, rather than solicits a favour."

During the enumeration of the candidate's merits, Monsieur Sabathier seemed absorbed in thought. But he now aroused himself, with an artful smile upon his countenance,

"Countess!" said he, "just now, you ac-

cused me of dissimulation, I now address you with undeniable frankness. It is true there is to be a new batch of peers, not as numerous as that of the 5th of November, but limited; and I do not conceal from you that they will be most guarded in their selection. I need not tell you, Madam, that in politics, friendship gives way to policy. The ministers must fortify their position. In the impossibility of rewarding all their numerous adherents, it is but natural they should decide in favour of present services to those of former days. Monsieur de Chantevilliers may have every possible right to the dignity of the peerage; moreover, he has solicited it these ten years, which is of itself almost a claim; yet I regret to say, he will not be nominated."

"You would have me believe, then, that past services are to be forgotten; that they will dare overlook the actual services of Monsieur de Chantevilliers, and set him aside! Does he not still serve the government, as he has

incessantly since 1815? At this moment, is he not at the chamber voting with the ministers? Are they not sure of his influence, his support?"

"*Too* sure, perhaps," replied the malicious official.

Madame de Chantevilliers opened her fine eyes, as if they had made the sudden discovery of a new horizon.

"Such, then, is the solution of the riddle!" said she, confounded. "To obtain his just recompense, he must range himself on the benches of the opposition?"

"It is too late," said the old official, calmly.

"Too late?" repeated the Countess. "Perhaps not! No one can doubt the fidelity of my husband's opinions; but the neglect manifested towards him would shake fidelity itself! Injustice fills up the gulph between devotion and desertion. The ministers would do well to remember the example of Coriolanus."

"Alas! Madam, what has the Count done, that you compare him with such a renegade as Coriolanus? Yet, I dare swear," said the malicious official, "you will never be obliged to throw yourself at his feet to implore the salvation of your country. The electricity of the ministerial bench would raise him from his seat, when his party rose to vote. A black ball would scorch his hand! Never could he throw it into the urn. Monsieur de Chantevilliers is ministerial to the marrow of his bones. Every one knows it. Better, perhaps, had he been less prodigal, and more wary in his boundless devotion to the government, so as to have challenged the vigilance of the eye of power. In this dilemma, Monsieur de Chantevilliers finds himself in the position of a woman who loses her empire from having betrayed her boundless love. I here unveil a naked truth in politics; which is the necessity of stipulating the price of a service before you perform it. To exact of the ministers that they cancel the terms

of the contract, is to ask the price of a thing they no longer possess. Monsieur de Chantevilliers is very well in his way, in the Chamber of Deputies. But they are sure of his vote; and, believe me, Madam, if he have nothing better to offer than his services, his chance of promotion is a poor one."

The Countess rose, and stood some time confused.

"If he have nothing better to offer than his services! What mean you by that?"—said she, with a sigh.

"I mean to say that, as far as regards himself, Monsieur de Chantevilliers has lost the field; but there are still means for his succeeding."

"And how, pray?" inquired the Countess, much agitated.

"Through yourself, Madam," replied Monsieur Sabathier, taking a pinch of snuff.

The deputy's wife rose, and drew her chair nearer to the man in office.

"Explain yourself, explain yourself!"

cried she, with childish impatience.—"What can I do?—What service can I render?—Have I a vote in the Chamber?"

"A lady of your attractions, Madam, need not to go to the Chamber to vote. You alluded to Coriolanus in talking of your husband. Allow me to call to your mind the name of the Duchess de Longueville. Is not the parallel more in place?"

"But the Duchess of Longueville was a woman of questionable reputation," said she, knitting her brows.

"Our habits differ essentially, Madam, from those of the Fronde. Without resorting to the extremes of the sister of the great Condé, a woman may still, even in these days, acquire political influence."

"I agree with you," said Madame de Chantevilliers; "there are many examples of it. But with regard to myself, what would you suggest?"

"The ministers, Madam, are far from sure of their majority; and weary of the uncertainty of their position, are determined to make an end of it. It is essential to them to bring over half a dozen members of the opposition, which would give a difference of twelve votes in favour of ministers. It so happens, that there is a man in the chamber who has succeeded in enlisting under his banners several new members; and who, with that influence, disposes of the six votes of which we stand in need. This man once gained, his satellites will follow, and the majority is sure. The faction must relinquish its see-saw system, and order will be re-established. The conversion of this man is of the utmost importance; the issue of the session depends upon it. One and only one person can effect this! You will readily guess Madam, that it is yourself. Succeed, and Monsieur de Chantevilliers will be a peer of France!"

The Countess, who had listened with profound attention, remained some time unable to reply.

"All the deputies of my acquaintance vote with government;" said she;—"how am I to attain an ascendancy over a man I never see?"

"By seeing him," replied the sly old man.

"But you have not mentioned the name of this important personage?"—replied the Countess, with assumed indifference.

Monsieur Sabathier glanced from the corner of his eye, at the door behind which Dauriac was concealed; then, fixing the would-be peeress, replied:—"It is one of your provincial friends, Madam; and his name is Groscassand de la Gironde!"

At that instant, the handle of the door rattled in the hand of Adolphe, and the Countess moved suddenly back.

"Monsieur Groscassand?" cried she laughing outright, while a slight blush pervaded her

cheek. "I really wonder you do not propose General Lafayette!"

"That might be more difficult!" said the old man smiling. "Still, if *you* will deign to be Armida, the hero of the two hemispheres, would scarcely be more cruel than Rinaldo."

Madame de Chantevilliers rose, and with a degree of somewhat mundane vanity for a person so immaculate, drew her cashmere round her waist, as if to exhibit the graceful outline of her queenly form.

"There is no being rational with you this morning!" said she, "your juvenile reminiscences almost make me repent my visit. What with your Armidas, and duchesses, you are determined to scandalise me; luckily for you, this is a day of mercy with me. Adieu, vexatious man!—Since you do not choose to let me be a peeress—you must take the consequences."

"On the contrary, I accept only my sincere regrets on the occasion," replied the official;

" but you are now aware that it depends upon *you* and not on *me*."

" Well, well!—after my ball, I will return to the charge, and if you do not then comply with my request, woe betide you."

While uttering these words, like the *quos ego* of Neptune, the Countess raised her lily white hand with a threatening gesture, which the gallant official instantly seized, and pressed it to his lips with youthful eagerness.

" Above all, do not forget my Wednesdays," said the Countess, in answer to the compliment.

Having escorted the ambitious lady to the limits of his official empire, Monsieur Sabatheir returned to his bureau, and found Dauriac installed before the fire place.

" Discreet youth, who listen at the doors! are you inclined to figure in a quadrille opposite your friend Groscassand, at the ball of the redoubtable Countess de Chantevilliers?" inquired he.

"Do you think she will invite him?" inquired Adolphe.

"This very day!"

"But he will not go!"

"He will!"

"And will you take me, then, to this ball?"

"Why not? you know I have *carte blanche*, in spite of the exclusive ideas of the Countess."

"In that case, I accept with gratitude. I have something more in view than a mere party of pleasure."

"You want to see the left side dancing before the Faubourg St. Germain, like David before the ark? Come here then on Wednesday at nine; and above all, remember, the silence of the grave, on all you have heard and seen in this privileged room." Monsieur Sabathier now dismissed his young friend; who left the hotel, meditating an act of retaliation, which had occurred to him during the interview between the chief clerk, and the unflinching high priestess of the School of Decorum.

CHAPTER V.

If it be true that vengeance is the pleasure of the gods, it becomes a still intenser feeling with man, in defence of the woman he loves; acting upon the heart, like the fiery shower upon the brain of the Indian savage. He who beholds the idol of his soul exposed to the slanders of society, would willingly crush the whole mass under foot; and for an ironical look or perfidious sneer, repeats within himself the sanguinary longing of Caligula! For in true love, there is a kind of latent ferocity. Unaccustomed to the habits of fashionable society, Dauriac was new to such provocations. Wounded in his dearest feel-

ings for the first time, his thirst for vengeance was so inordinate, that his resentment could ill endure delay in the chastisement he meditated. From his hiding place in the study of the man in office, Adolphe had not lost a word, or inflection of voice of the Countess de Chantevilliers.—From this pitiless scrutiny, he came to a conclusion, which an indifferent observer might have overlooked.

"I am pretty nearly sure," said he, on leaving the official residence, "that this diamond is mere paste. There are female Tartuffes, as well as male; and unless I am much mistaken, Decorum is with her a mask.—At heart, she is a woman like the rest; perhaps less than a woman. What an ass she made of poor old Sabathier. Unless I am much mistaken, she will fall, like other angels, through ambition!"

As he came to this conclusion, he found

himself before the column of the Place Vendome, where he had unknowingly arrived, when

> Ah, qu'on est fier d'etre Français.
> Quand on regarde la Colonne.

was roared into his ear, by a stentorian voice; and, on turning his head, he beheld Monsieur Groscassand (de la Gironde).

"I could have sworn you were in love, from your pre-occupied manner," cried the liberal deputy. "Two to one that I name what you are thinking of!"

"You would certainly lose!"

"Twelve years ago, I might have taken exception at your ecstasies in favour of the charming Countess. But now, the Portalis' amendment has more charm for me than all the bright eyes in the world. To prove to you how sick I am of such nonsense, I will give you a friendly intimation. Hasten to the boulevards, in the direction of the Opera."

"Why so?" replied Dauriac.

"You will meet the lady of your thoughts. I have just seen her in her carriage, apparently shopping. I did not bow to her; for in general, she does not condescend to notice me. But, strange to tell, on this occasion, she bowed first, leaning out of the window in the most marked manner. Yes, my dear fellow! the stately Countess de Chantevilliers acknowledged a serf like myself. Had I been a peer of France, I could not have been more courteously saluted. Twelve years ago, such a smile would have convulsed me. But I am off to the Chamber to annihilate the projected measure. The ministers will not be disposed to laugh this evening, I promise you.—Suppose you come with me."

"Thank you," said Dauriac, "I fear I am incapable just now of the attention your speech will, doubtless, deserve."

"I understand—I understand!" said the

deputy, good humouredly, "and leave you to your delicious meditations. But as you are in the clouds, beware of the carriages; for I was nearly crushed just now while ruminating my exordium."

The two friends separated, and the young man returned to his train of reflections.

"Why," thought he, "should I not be the instrument of my own act of justice? Who could serve me half so well? To achieve a conquest over that woman, would be a masterstroke!"

"Of what are you thinking, dear Adolphe?" inquired the young widow, with whom he passed the greater part of the two days preceding the ball of the Countess. "I am convinced you are concealing something from me; not very dreadful, however, for I never saw you gayer. I am sure you contemplate one of my interdicted surprises!"

"You did not prohibit the surprise I am

anticipating," said Adolphe, laughing. "But do not, at present, expect me to take you into my confidence."

On the Wednesday evening, about ten o'clock, Monsieur Sabathier, and his young friend, entered the drawing-room of Madame de Chantevilliers which an assemblage, more choice than numerous, already began to fill. The Countess received the old official with the most marked courtesy; and though in the greatest hurry, found time to address him some of those feminine flatteries usually dedicated to men of a certain influence. As to Dauriac, in return for the most elaborate of bows, he was acknowledged by a mere inclination of the head.

"She does not remember me!" thought he, biting his lips; for like most good-looking young men, he had thought it impossible that anybody should forget his face.

"And now," said Monsieur Sabathier, "let me present you to the master of the

house. I perceive him close to the door by which we entered. Let us go up to him."

The Count de Chantevilliers was an old man of hale appearance, whose face announced the grave and calm expression peculiar to magisterial life. Masking his absolute nullity by a reserve which, in the eyes of many, was mistaken for dignity, he spoke but little, so that his silence passed for profound reflection. In the Chamber, he was regarded as a jurisconsult; amongst his professional colleagues at Bordeaux, as a political authority. Before the revolution, Monsieur de Chantevilliers would willingly have exchanged his ancestral chateau against a garret in the palace of Versailles. In 1828, he embraced a parliamentary career, more for a position in society, than from ambition in public life. In a drawing-room, he was the first to do homage to any minister, or important personage; but with his inferiors, sometimes indeed with his equals, he took

his revenge. Were he walking with the latter, for instance, he would every now and then halt, so as to compel those who were with him to imitate him; then be the first to proceed again. This was an indirect manner of asserting his superiority; and was not the only statagem he resorted to for a similar purpose.

At the moment the ministerial deputy was returning the bows of Monsieur Sabathier and Dauriac, the pompously plebeian name of Monsieur Groscassand (de la Gironde), re-echoed in the salon of the aristocratic Countess de Chantevilliers.

"Groscassand? how comes he here?" muttered the president of the chamber, disagreeably surprised. "Can the Countess have sent him an invitation?—It must surely be a mistake."

"Not in the least," said Sabathier, smiling at Dauriac.

The liberal orator of Bordeaux paused at

the door of the salon, like a great actor who takes his time before he comes on, intending no doubt to allow the admiring crowd to satiate their eyes upon the illustrious man about to make his appearance. But for the last hour, there had been such a rush of celebrities of all kinds; ambassadors, marshals of France, peers, literary lions, noblemen of historical names, and women of fashion, that, with the exception of the group round the master of the house, nobody noticed the entrance of Monsieur Groscassand (de la Gironde); a name hugely small, in spite of the filched accessary of that of his department, an appropriation not unprecedented amongst his colleagues. Finding he had failed in the effect he intended to produce, the patriotic deputy contracted his lips, and pompously insinuated his right hand under the lappel of his coat, close buttoned up to his chin. In this senatorial attitude, he advanced towards the master of the house, who surveyed him in solemn silence, without ad-

vancing a step to receive him. However great the growing importance of his new colleague, the president of the royal court could see no other than the lawyer who, in his magisterial dignity, he was accustomed to behold below the bar in the courts of Bordeaux.

The two gentlemen exchanged most formal bows; for if Monsieur de Chantevilliers possessed the traditions of the ancient parliament, Monsieur Groscassand had also the punctilious susceptibility of his profession. Having observed the rules of courtesy towards the master of the house, the deputy of the left passed on, and stood opposite to Dauriac.

"What on earth are you doing here?" said he, taking him familiarly by the arm.

"The same as yourself," replied the young man, with a smile.

"I am just come from our club in the Rue Grange Batelière," said Groscassand; "and before I go to Laffitte's, came to pass an hour here. The house is pretty well; rather elegant

than otherwise. But talk to me of Laffitte's for splendour. Long live the bankers, say I. Before them, our aristocracy must lower their colours."

"To go from the Rue Grange Batelière to the rue d'Artois, therefore, you pass through the Faubourg St. Germain?" said Adolphe. "You have no mercy upon your horses!"

"Who cares for job horses!"

"And so you have succeeded in penetrating the temple of your inexorable divinity! But by what chance do I see you here? You did not tell me, the other day, you were invited."

"I was *not*, then," replied the deputy. "On returning from the Chamber, I found the invitation. Unceremonious enough, to invite one on the eve of the ball! It does not suit the grand-son of a ploughman, it does not suit *me*, I say, to be scurvily used by such diminutives as the Chantevilliers! But on recalling to mind the gracious smile of the Countess on

the Boulevart, my pride abated. The invitation proceeded from her, I am sure; for never would the president have been capable of a civility towards a lawyer! To be punctilious in etiquette, under such circumstances, would be absurd; and the will of woman being supreme, here I am.—Where is my beautiful tigress?"

"In the second drawing-room," replied Dauriac, who could not refrain from a smile at the cavalier manner with which the deputy of the opposition uttered his last words. 'Has ten to pay her your grateful respects."

CHAPTER VI.

Monsieur Groscassand treaded his way through the quadrilles which were forming, and thus cleared the road for his friend. After several efforts, they succeeded in penetrating the group which surrounded Madame de Chantevilliers. At the sight of her old admirer, who inclined himself low enough before her to expose his bare crown, the Countess interrupted a phrase she was addressing to an envoy from some northern power, to smile upon her newly arrived guest.

"Monsieur de Chantevilliers will be grateful for the honour you do us," said she; "as to myself, I hardly dared hope for such a compliment. You so rarely seek the society of your

provincial connections, that during the two months you have been in Paris, you have not even deigned to remember we belong to the same city!"

"I could scarcely conceive, Madam, that you were aware of it yourself!" replied the deputy, who never having been admitted into the circle of the Countess, even during their mutual residence in the country, was utterly confounded by this sudden outbreak of civility.

"I received letters from Bordeaux yesterday," resumed Madame de Chantevilliers, "and heard with pleasure that your sister had been happily confined of a little boy. She had only girls I fancy! It is a most important event for your family, and I take a lively interest in your satisfaction. Madame Lheritier is so amiable a person!"

"My sister?—my nephew?—my family?"—repeated the deputy, scarcely able to bow in requital of these compliments. "Is she laughing at me? She, who at a ball at the pre-

fecture at Bordeaux, changed her place that she might not contaminate herself, by sitting next to the daughter of a plebeian, like my poor sister?"

The arrival of an old duke with a powdered peruke and the order of the Holy Ghost, forced the Countess to suspend a conversation which seemed to be far from distasteful to her.

"I am always at home on Wednesdays," said she to the deputy, as he gave way to the venerable duke. "I am also at home on other days, when you can find time, from your more important occupations, to talk of Bordeaux."

The Countess did not terminate her phrase, but her looks were more expressive than words. In spite of his forty-five years, his grave profession, and graver politics, a triple armour generally proof against the pointed arrows of love, Monsieur Groscassand (de la Gironde) experienced an emotion carrying him back at least twelve years, in his life; and ex-

tricating himself from a crush of ambassadors, ministerial deputies, old knights of St. Louis, and fashionable dandies of the Faubourg St. Germain, withdrew pensively into the card-room.

"She wishes to talk with me about Bordeaux;" said he, luxuriating over a *sorbet* (for at forty-five, the tender passion has little taste for fasting); "what the deuce does she want? Her words must have some hidden meaning. She is not a woman who talks for the sake of talking. What a reception! What a smile! What a seductive voice! And then such kind allusions to my sister, to whom she never addressed a word! I expected to hear her inquire after my poodle, as Don Juan does of Monsieur Dimanche! What is the meaning of all this? Does she repent her former cruelty? At the end of twelve years, it is rather late! Still, in spite of those twelve years, I might perhaps be weak enough to love her. She is still so handsome, so distinguished,

so imperious, so contemptuous, and above all, of so strict a reputation, that it is a conquest of which a man of my eminence might be proud. The Countess de Chantevilliers!—How well it sounds!—Seated behind her at the Opera, more than one dandy of the day will envy me—to begin with little Dauriac!"

While the democratical deputy was dreaming of the honours of an aristocratic attachment, Adolphe ruminated, in the adjoining room, his projects of vengeance. Every minute's delay appeared an age.

"If I do not speak to her this evening," thought he, "when shall I find such another opportunity? But how to attract her notice in the midst of such a crowd? I must try something as novel as it is striking, to excite her attention and curiosity. Don Juan himself would be at fault in my position. In all conscience, I cannot ask her to dance! Were I, however, to venture, she would

of course refuse; but it would be a means of entering into conversation. Besides, a woman of that age, is never offended in being thought young. Perhaps, a quadrille is too juvenile. A waltz might be more to the purpose!"

Without further hesitation, Dauriac pushed through the crowd, and advancing towards the Countess who was giving instructions to her servant,

"May I hope, Madam, that you will allow me the honour of a waltz?" said he, trying to assume a prepossessing expression.

The high priestess of decorum, regarded him with a look that might have frozen a salamander.

"Sir," said she, in her sternest voice, "waltzing was never yet seen in the house of Monsieur de Chantevilliers.

"Dare I then solicit the honour of a country dance?" replied Adolphe, a little disconcerted by the rebuke.

"I never dance!" said the Countess, with

a glance that might have annihilated Amadis de Gaul.

Dauriac vainly ransacked his brain for some striking, fascinating trait, such as might influence in his favour the woman of his utter detestation. But he could find only the most common-place ideas, deteriorated by his confused manner and stammering voice.

"Are you then, Madam, the only person insensible to the pleasures of your charming fête," said he.

Madame de Chantevilliers stared at the man, whose audacious pretensions permitted him to enter into an unauthorized conversation with her; when lo! on throwing back her head, she recognised the admirer of Madame de Versan.

"Sir," said she, carefully articulating every syllable, "you are come hither, probably, in search of one you will not find. To whom am I indebted for the honour of your visit?"

"To Monsieur Sabathier, Madam," replied Adolphe, abruptly; for though the question

of the Countess was politely expressed, the tone in which it was uttered amounted almost to an expulsion.

Madame de Chantevilliers was embarrassed. The magical name of Monsieur Sabathier rendering her meditated expulsion impracticable. She retired from Dauriac, casting upon him a last look which might be interpreted thus—"Stay, since you are here—but presume not to return."

"Prude — arch hypocrite — disappointed peeress!"—thought Adolphe, in the embittered depths of his heart; and convinced that all around had witnessed his embarrassing interview, he would have vanished in the crowd, had not Monsieur Groscassand, radiant with vanity, impeded his way.

"Well, Dauriac! How are you getting on?" said the deputy. "You have spoken, it seems, to the inexorable tyrant? You must have been all eloquence, I am sure; for you are

yet flushed with the excitement of that happy moment."

"Revenge is a stronger excitement, than love," replied Adolphe, in a faltering voice.

"And upon whom are you about to wreak your vengeance?"—inquired the liberal, gently caressing his chin.

"On yonder hypocrite!" said the adorer of Adrienne;—"and it shall be a work to be applauded by all victims of her impertinence, —you above all."

"Allow me to settle my own affairs," replied Monsieur Groscassand; whose weasel eyes had just met those of the Countess, who seemed far from resentful at the admiration of the former martyr of her beauty.

The commencement of a quadrille now separated the friends; and Dauriac immediately afterwards met Monsieur Sabathier, who had just risen from the card-table.

"You are more rational than I am; for

though you do not dance, you are not foolish enough to lose your money," said he. "What have you done with Groscassand? I saw him just now, Spartan as he is, swallowing ices and compliments as glibly as I might do—I, the staunch adherent of absolutism."

"Groscassand is more in his element in the Chamber than in the ball-room," replied the young man, rightly construing the supercilious sneer of his honourable friend.

"Yonder, he is conversing with the Countess," exclaimed the official. "Observe, how he passes his finger through his hair, and the Mirabeau-like attitude he assumes! Good! The chord of sensibility vibrates! And what amenity of manner on the part of the Countess! What an ingenuous smile! She half closes her fine eyes. Mercy on us!—we shall have her fifteen years of age, if matters go on at this rate. Ay, ay! I see, the ministers will gain a white ball the more, before the end of the session."

"You have decided, then, that Monsieur Chantevilliers is to be a peer of France?" said Adolphe, in a tone of spite and irony—for the success of Monsieur Groscassand rendered his own defeat still more humiliating.

"That is quite another affair," observed Sabathier. "One conquest at a time."

The admirer of Madame de Versan quitted the ball of the haughty Countess, depressed and disappointed. In reflecting upon his ill success, it seemed to him more and more disagreeable to have it interpreted according to the malicious commentary of the old official. The admiration of Adolphe for Monsieur Groscassand was purely political. While bowing to the opinions of the liberal deputy upon questions of public interest, the young man considered himself his equal upon the floor of the drawing-room, or, in fact, in the art of pleasing, thoroughly his master. To imagine that a provincial advocate

could succeed where he had failed, was in his eyes too ludicrous. It was not possible a woman could possess so vile a taste, or be so debased by the sordid interests of ambition, as to tolerate, at the hands of a fat legal practitioner, the attentions that seemed an outrage on the part of one of the most elegant young men in Paris.

"All this has not common sense," said Dauriac, having reviewed the events of the evening. "They are both dupes. Monsieur Sabathier, whose scepticism refuses to admit that a woman can be virtuous for virtue's sake;—Groscassand, with his gascon conceit, supposing that, with his age and appearance, he can play the gallant! The strongest characters are often blemished by such weakness; and the forensic graces he displayed this evening will not detract from his political worth, or senatorial eloquence. But he is much deceived if he attaches any importance to the reception he met. The Countess is

ambitious, would fain be a peeress, and would feel no scruple in availing herself of the political influence of Groscassand, were he silly enough to be ensnared. But let him beware. The frigidity of the North Pole is written in her face; and a man might as well try to climb the heights of Chimborazo, as seek to subdue this icy votary of decorum."

Difficulties apparently insurmountable, serve only to stimulate dauntless spirits. After comparing Madame de Chantevilliers with that far-famed mountain, the first idea of Dauriac, was that of Monsieur de Saussure scaling Mont Blanc. From this involuntary comparison, he decided, like a famous French general, that the word "impossible," had no existence in the French language; and resolved not to relinquish the contest merely because he had failed in a skirmish.

On the third day after the ball, he presented himself at the Countess's, having screwed

up his courage to the necessary point. On getting out of his cabriolet, he cast his eye upon the suite of rooms in which he had been thought an intruder some days before. Behind one of the windows, he caught a glimpse of the Countess; who, on hearing the noise of wheels, had lifted up the muslin curtain to look into the court of the hotel. Adolphe flew up the stairs, like a soldier to the deadly breach.

"The Countess is out," said the servant to whom he gave his name.

"I have this instant seen her," said Dauriac determined to gain his point.

"It is possible, Sir;—but she is not at home," said the well-bred lacquey.

"Be so good as to announce me."

"I have already explained, Sir, that the Countess is not at home," replied the knight of the *aiguillette*, with still firmer assurance.

Adolphe felt induced to try the effect of his

cane upon the shoulders of the varlet, who was precisely the fellow he had seen at Madame de Versan's. But on reflecting upon the absurdity of a personal conflict, he suppressed his anger and retired.

As he was about to get into his cabriolet, he perceived, at the entrance of the hotel, Groscassand jumping out of a hackney coach, to which the porter had refused admision into the court.

On perceiving the lengthened and disappointed face of his young friend, he advanced towards him in the manner of a keeper who detects a poacher.

"You are out early this morning!" said the deputy, in his brazen voice.—"Only two o'clock, and want an audience already?"

"There is no audience to-day," replied Adolphe. "The Countess is out."

"Out?" repeated the deputy. "Well, I will at least leave my card. I have sent

away my coach, so pray drop me at the Chamber."

"The more willingly, that the debate began an hour ago, and your absence might prejudice the issue of the discussion."

Without noticing the sarcasm contained in these words, the deputy of the opposition ascended the staircase. Adolphe then heard the ring at the bell, and re-shutting of the door; but after waiting in vain for two minutes, nobody came down.

"She receives *him* and shuts the door against *me!*" said he, sinking back into the cabriolet. "Very agreeable, truly! Well, so much the better! He is working in my cause, without being aware of it—my man of business, and without fees!—Let him flutter round this torch of virtue, and singe his wings. On the whole it suits me better; for Adrienne would have disapproved my project of conquest."

Adolphe now began to shape his plans of vengeance, on a new footing; and hastened to the feet of his beloved Adrienne, where a happy hour of mutual confidence soon obliterated the impertinences of the hateful Countess.

CHAPTER VII.

After the grand event of the ball of Madame de Chantevilliers, Monsieur Groscassand experienced, in his heart, the vibration of a chord long mute. His admiration of the haughty Countess revived, from the moment he found himself again distinguished by her notice. Gifted with a remarkable knowledge of jurisprudence, and great oratorical eloquence, Monsieur Groscassand ranked these two advantages far below those of his personal attractions. Above all, he considered himself a man of excessive refinement, peculiarly acceptable to women, and born to figure in fashionable society. This was, in fact, his foot of clay; as devotion

to worldly opinion was that of the Countess. The triumphs of the bar had lost their charm; his success in the Chamber was too recent to satisfy his pride. The vanity of the Gascon aspired to more than mere parliamentary trophies, and he still dreamt of a climax, or at least, a series of triumphs. After devoting his mornings to his country, Monsieur Groscassand would have been enchanted, as a grateful and legitimate reward for his efforts, in the opportunity of depositing his forensic laurels at the feet of some woman of fashion. The democratical deputy, deeply conscious of his plebeian extraction, held dearly to the baubles he affected to despise—such as titles of nobility, and distinction of caste. The ladies of the Faubourg St. Germain exercised a strong influence over his imagination; and the esteem which began at a baroness, rose in proportionate respect for a duchess.

The manœuvres of Madame de Chantevil-

liers happened to fill up a vacum in the heart of the democrat, but he still looked forward to the more irresistible attractions of some charmer, boasting her sixteen quarterings.

Reminiscences of the past, rekindled the dying embers of his affections. Love, like the Phœnix, is not born again, but bequeaths to its ashes some latent sparks; which, in the heart of the deputy, blazed anew when fanned by the vivifying breeze of gratified vanity. To borrow a metaphor from the charta of Louis XVIII, the opposition member resolved to "relink the broken chain of time," and flattered himself that he should cull at Paris, the grapes which at Bordeaux he had pronounced too sour.

Before he presented himself to the Countess, Groscassand had made a short but interested appearance at the Chamber. Perceiving his colleague of the centre in his usual seat, listening half asleep to the prosy speaker at the tribune, he slipped away, in spite of the ad-

monition of Lafayette, who would fain have detained him, the debate being important; then, stepped into a hackney coach, and proceeded to the hotel of the Countess.

The prohibition exercised upon Dauriac was not enforced upon the liberal deputy, who remarked this with satisfaction in following the lacquey who, hearing the patronymic of Groscassand, majestically articulated by its proprietor, instantly directed his steps towards the Countess's apartment.

Madame de Chantevilliers rose upon seeing the visitor she probably expected. But his triumphant bow, as well as the easy assurance with which he threw himself into an arm-chair, caused her a momentary mortification that made her almost repent her ambition. The would-be peeress felt that the ermine of her mantle might be somewhat soiled, if derived from the hands of this presumptuous plebeian.

"I would not accept a throne at such a

price!" thought she, seating herself as solemnly upon her chair as if it really had been a throne.

In spite of his conceit, the deputy saw that he must not proceed rashly; for though deficient in good breeding, he was not wanting in tact. He accordingly assumed the utmost decorum of reserve, tempered by the most obsequious devotion; till, by degrees, the confidence of the startled prude was thoroughly restored.

By dexterous recurrences to old times, by approaching word by word, step by step, the original position he had occupied twelve years before at her feet, he contrived to soften the hard heart of the haughty intrigante.

"It appears then," said she, after an hour spent in mutual retrospections, "it appears that you have always retained for me some degree of regard?"

"Some degree?" reiterated Groscassand with the air of a Werter. "Alas, Madam, not

a day of my life in which I do not bring before my mind's eye, the house where you used to reside; and under the window of which I used to expend hours, hoping for a glimpse of the object of my adoration!"

"What folly—what madness!"—faltered the Countess, intently watching him.

"The austerity of your principles, forbad all hope of a nearer approach," said the deputy.

"The fate of women is, indeed, deplorable," observed the Countess. "If they respond to the voice of their heart, they are utterly condemned; yet when they resist their inclinations, far from exciting compassion, they are reproached with — cruelty — ingratitude, hardness of heart!"

As she uttered this fine sentiment, the Countess raised her eyes to the ceiling, then softly lowering them towards the deputy, contemplated him with the tender look of one who is the victim of her own virtues. Con-

ceiving that the democratical member had swallowed the bait held out, like a skilful angler, she gently felt the line before she pulled him out of the water.

"You reproach me with severity," said she. "But how could I have acted otherwise? With your fervent imagination, the merest encouragement on my part, might have been followed by the most irreparable consequences. Is it my fault if your passion refused to understand my position?—Could I have controlled your feelings, and infused into your excited brain an atom of my own reason, I might, perhaps, have relaxed the vigilant austerity of which your conduct was the only cause. Sometimes—I must tell you all, it is now twelve years ago, and my confessions are devoid of danger—sometimes, in thinking of you, I used to deplore the cruel fate which placed us in such different spheres; inwardly regretting that I could not receive you as I do to-day, and make you my friend. When I

heard of your triumphs at the bar, in which, pardon the presumption, I thought I had a certain influence, I felt that in your triumphant moments, you inwardly exclaimed, 'she will hear of this!' No one has followed, with deeper interest, though indifferent in appearance, the progress of your public career. On the day of your election at Bordeaux, I could scarcely refrain from illuminating. Though my adverse opinions reminded me that I was a royalist, and you a democrat, I was happy in spite of myself. For that day did you justice, by placing you in the position to which you were so well entitled! Yes! it was a moment of triumph for me!"

Had Monsieur Groscassand's moral nature resembled that of the frog in the fable, he must have burst before the end of this discourse; puffed up as he was with its flatteries and inebriating incense. Such were his ecstacies of delight, that instead of replying, he sat with his neck extended, his mouth half

open, his face all radiant, as much as to say: *Encore,—encore!* The Countess now gradually but skilfully approached the object she had in view, and assumed the initiative.

"I deserve to be reproved," said she, "for revelling in the success of one of our enemies. I see you have undertaken the task."

"I, Madam?" cried the deputy, awaking from his ecstacy on hearing this reproach.

"You! Formerly, I beheld in you, a man whose talents placed his destiny in Paris, in the focus of affairs—whose fame would do honour to his province.—But now, I am forced to acknowledge a dangerous and powerful adversary of the government to which I am devoted; the adherent to principles, which I cannot approve; in fact, the champion of a hostile cause. Every step of your career, increases the distance between us. I ought not, perhaps, to confess this source of keen disappointment; but the purity of my intentions justifies my frankness.

"I take in the *Constitutionnel*, that I may have your speeches properly reported, and can scarcely impress upon you the source of regret they have been to me, to see a noble mind so ill-directed, such supreme reason reduced to descend to sophisms, in a word, such a deplorable abuse of the rarest faculties, that in perusing your speeches I cannot resist a feeling of vexation bordering upon frenzy. So admirable a talent perverted, enslaved, contaminated by the cause to which it has sacrificed itself, afflicts me beyond the power of description. In reading your orations, I always fancy I see an eagle enveloped by a serpent, instead of outspreading its wings, as bearer of the thunder of the gods. Tell me, oh! tell me! will you ever cast off the serpent, and seize the thunder bolt in your talons?" The Countess paused, that she might not weaken the effect of her eloquence.

"Such praises, Madam, turn my brain!" replied the lawyer, who, for once, spoke the

truth. "But allow me to question the justice of your reproach. Though my opinions may displease you, I hold to them, for they are conscientious and honourable."

"You are sincere, at all events; which makes me hope that there is still a remedy for the evil. With hearts like yours there is always a resource. If what I have often dreamt were not a chimera, if it were possible to prove to you the falsehood and perverseness of your present notions, and wed you to the eternal principles of order, law, and justice, I would not yield the glory of such an enterprize, for the conquest of a throne! To effect your conversion, to assure the cause of royalty the support of your abilities, I would give—but hold, we will dwell no more on the subject, which I find overpowers me! Do you know you have been here these two hours?"

She looked at the clock, as if in regret at the rapidity of time. The interview had reached

exactly the point she wished to gain, and she thought it impolitic to prolong it. To halt at the exact moment, is a talent possessed by most women. The first bolt was shot, though gently; as the Countess preferred it should insinuate itself, unfelt, aware that there is no armour proof against flattery.

On his return home the ambitious democrat paced to and fro in his room, rubbing his hands, his usual way of evincing a feeling of gratification in his paroxysm of vanity. The roses figuring in the carpet on which he trod, seemed emblematical of those he should soon entwine with those of his parliamentary wreath. After an hour of this vehement exercise, during which his imagination soared high in air, carrying aloft the torch of Love instead of the thunder of Jupiter alluded to by the Countess, he stood before the pier glass some time in profound contemplation of his own person.

"Let us be just!" said he pushing back his frizzly hair, so as to bare his forehead; these

women of quality really possess great refinement of instinct. They judge men dispassionately and can appreciate their qualities. Now that I know the seductive Countess, her conduct of former years does not surprise me. She is rich, well born, handsome; what more natural than that, possessing such advantages and having so much to concede, she should value herself accordingly? What was I twelve years ago, that I should aspire to such a conquest? An insignificant lawyer!" continued the deputy, (who like most men that succeed, held cheap his antecedents) "having neither consistency nor reputation. Can I be surprised, then, that a woman of rank should have preferred the jewel of her fair fame to all the love I had to offer. Now, the case is different!" said he, with a smile of self-satisfaction. "My wings are grown. I have a name, a position, renown. Yesterday, at the Opera, I heard whispered on all sides around me, 'that is Groscassand (de la Gironde)!' though su-

perior to such petty triumphs of pride, they have their price with women.—It is evident that, in the eyes of Madame de Chantevilliers, I am become colossal. She reads my speeches! Who would have thought it? A Countess of the noble Faubourg who, for my sake, takes in the Constitutionnel! The great orator possesses in her eyes a value unattainable by an obscure barrister! My triumphs occupy her mind; and from thence to the heart, the road is short.—And so she wants to convert me?—Convert ME!—Divided as we are, she must raise a bridge between us of no mean extent. Lafayette would be amused, I suspect, if he heard I had become ministerial for the sake of the wife of a thick-headed president. Were she not so charming a woman, —a woman of such unblemished reputation— the idea would be too preposterous!"

CHAPTER VIII.

The friendship thus adroitly brought about between the monarchical Countess and the patriotic deputy, assumed such a specious appearance, that Monsieur de Chantevilliers could not object to it. Such was the immaculate reputation of his wife, that though the pride of the stately president winced at seeing his house polluted by the presence of him he so disdainfully called "Master Groscassand," as deputy of the centre, he could not refuse lending himself to a project essential to his patrons; which, if successful, would ultimately open the doors of the Luxembourg to himself. Besides, the judicious lawyer usually selected the moment of the president's presence in the Cham-

ber, for his visits to the Countess. Monsieur de Chantevilliers, in order to ingratiate himself with the ministers, was most assiduous in his duties at the Chamber. In the intricate arguments which took place betwixt the incorruptible politician, and immaculate Countess, Madame de Chantevilliers, avoiding all sentimental reminiscences, dwelt only upon his forensic triumphs; and read the Constitutionnel enough to interest herself in the leading topics of the day. But the liberal member, sick of the eternal dose of politics in the Chamber, ended by growing weary of a controversy which, far from gaining his point, evidently caused him to diverge from it.

"What on earth does she mean," thought he, after an argument in which he found his liberalism driven from pillar to post. "Does she expect to persuade me to adopt the colours of her husband? She ought, at least, to insinuate upon what terms! For were I treacherous enough to capitulate with my conscience, I

should not be ass enough to do it gratuitously. At the first attack, I will make some unimportant concession, but stipulate the terms; and we will see if she still persist in her project of conversion!"

Some days later, in consequence of a question of importance upon which Monsieur Groscassand was to speak, the Countess wished to put her imaginary ascendancy to the test. She therefore solicited her admirer to relinquish his project, without even accounting for his silence. The deputy resisted, argued, invoked his sense of duty; but after urgent prayers, yielded, obeying his preconceived determination, rather than the instances of a haughty woman's ambition.

"You see I can refuse you nothing!" said he, taking her hand. "But when is my submission to terminate the endless torments of this martyrdom?"

On finding her fingers imprisoned in the coarse beaver glove of the opposition member,

the face of the Countess evinced the most repugnant disgust. Fain would she have withdrawn them; but she was not quick enough to avoid the liberal's lips; which, though only imprinted on the tips of her nails, produced a deep blush, of which pride was the only origin.

Visions of the blue mantle trimmed with ermine, which flitted like a cloud of glory before the eyes of the president, checked the words of contempt hovering at that moment upon her lips; and she smiled, so as to make him think she confirmed the favour in which she had been thus taken by surprise.

The Countess resembled the victims of prodigality who sign promissory notes without ever thinking of the day of payment!

One morning, after leaving the Countess, with whom the deputy had had a most interesting interview, he met in the rue Taranne, Dauriac, whom he had not seen for some days, and who was just come from Madame

de Versan. The Gascon accosted his young friend in the presumptuous tone with which the victorious in love treat their less successful rivals.

"Well, Dauri[illegible]id he, "how goes sentiment?—Stil[illegible]re with the insensible Countess de Cha[illegible]rs?"

"I never was [illegible]lied Adolphe.

"You are g[illegible] discreet, I see;—a proof of your success."

"A fact of which you are at this moment an illustration!" replied Dauriac. "I am perfectly aware of your assiduities to Madame de Chantevilliers."

"Is our friendship, then, talked of in the world?" inquired the deputy, with an air of self-sufficiency.—"And what is said of us?"

"They say," replied Dauriac, wishing to feel his way, "that your success in Paris is much the same as at Bordeaux."

"They say that, do they?—Perhaps they are right! The Countess is invincible, eh? I always told you so. Indeed, no one knows it better than yourself."

"I give you my word I never was in love with her," replied Adolphe, who, in trying to win his confidence, wished above all to undeceive the deputy in the idea of his being a rival.

"Are you serious?"—inquired Groscassand.

"I swear to you that your surmises are quite erroneous. When I asked your information concerning her, it was in the interest of a third person."

"So much the better—so much the better!" cried Groscassand, whose thoughts were evidently pre-occupied. "By the way, my dear Dauriac," resumed he, "I am on the look out for an apartment somewhat more commodious than my own. My visitors in-

crease so rapidly, that I want a larger and more decent drawing-room. So short a time is to elapse before the close of the session, that I am unw engage a house for three weeks. any objection to let me the pretty lit in the Rue Gaillon which you inform you should have no occasion to occupy autumn?—It would render me an es sevice—a very essential service!"

Something peculiar in the air of the deputy, as he made his request, suspended on the lips of Dauriac the apologies he was about to utter.

"I will not *let* my rooms," said he; "but if it will be of any use to you, you are welcome to occupy them for the next month. They are quite complete. You may enter into possession of them when you think proper."

Having duly acknowledged this friendly service, Groscassand proceeded with his

young friend to examine the apartments, and the key was placed in his possession.

"You will excuse my keeping the duplicate key," observed Dauriac. "But the cabinet, at the end of the corridor, contains my family papers."

CHAPTER IX.

FIFTEEN days after this arrangement, Dauriac, who still retained his bachelor habits, was breakfasting in a café of the Palais Royal, when lo! a flaring article in the *Courrier Français* announced no less an event than the defection of Monsieur Groscassand (de la Gironde). The journalist, of course, cried *raca* against the deputy; and the various opposition journals imitated the anathema.

Adolphe, amazed beyond measure, left his breakfast unfinished, and mechanically ascended the Rue St. Honoré, with the demeanour of a man who has been bitterly duped.

In the midst of these painful reflections, he arrived before the church of St. Roch

and met Monsieur Sabathier, crossing the street, with a portfolio under his arm.

"Are you going to confession?" inquired the official, on seeing the moody countenance of Dauriac. "You look as serious as one of the penitential psalms!"

"Have you read the *Courrier Français?*" inquired the young man.

"Ah, ah! you are in mourning, then, for the patriotism of your friend Groscassand. Did I not predict his conversion?"

"Is it true, then?"

"Nothing can be more so. Yesterday he took his seat with the centre, and has attempted to bring over others. Do you still refuse your place?"

"I would fain retire from the world!" cried the astonished liberal. "Intercourse with mankind withers all the nobler feelings of the heart!"

"Do as I do," said the old official, with the sardonic smile of a professed misanthrope.

"Go and feed the ducks and fowls at the Jardin des Plantes—there is less chance of deceit with such creatures. To be sure, one often imagines them fat and tender, and they prove thin and uneatable.—Such is human life, my poor Dauriac! but one must make the best of it."

At that moment, the horses of a handsome equipage before the church, attracted the attention of the passers by, especially that of Sabathier.

"Strange enough! The carriage of Madame de Chantevilliers standing here, and I just saw her leaving the church by the little door in the other street, going towards the Rue Gaillon."

"Madame de Chantevilliers?" said Adolphe, somewhat startled.

"Herself! Perhaps Monsieur Groscassand lives in this neighbourhood?"

"He used to reside near the Chamber of Deputies," said the young man, suppressing the most vehement desire to divulge all he knew.

On leaving the old man, Adolphe ran rather than walked, towards the Rue Gaillon. He proceeded up the back stairs, of which he had retained the key, and entered unobserved.

On throwing open the drawing-room door, as if for the usual purport of a visit, the first object that struck him was Madame la Comtesse de Chantevilliers, seated on the divan, with the renegade deputy on his knees at her feet!

"A thousand pardons for the intrusion, my dear Groscassand," said he, with a smile. "When I told you that I retained a key of my apartment for access to my family papers, you did not forewarn me that you were in the habit of receiving such interesting visitors."

Both the deputy and his noble Dulcinea were already on their feet, each darting furious glances at the intruder.

"Monsieur de Groscassand could scarcely apprize you of my unpremeditated visit," said the decorous Countess, only a moment thrown off her guard. "You are perhaps unaware

that, as *Dame de Charité* of the parish, I am under the necessity of soliciting subscriptions for the poor committed to my charge."

And as she spoke, a splendid *aumonière* was extended towards him by the noble *quéteuse !*

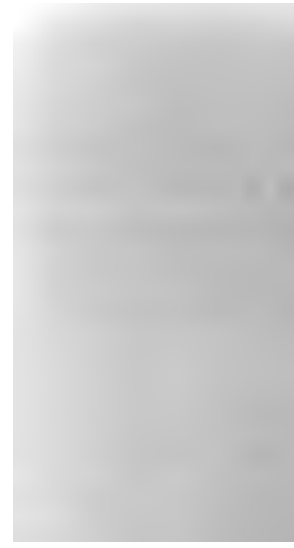
"Had you delayed your visit a month longer Madam," said Dauriac, amazed at her unequalled coolness; "you might have addressed your application to my wife, as well as to myself. This apartment is mine; and Madame de Versan, the lady who, for a slight breach of decorum, you so rudely excluded from your ball, is about to become my wife. *She* is not a *dame de charité* of the parish; *She* has no splendid equipage to leave standing before the Church of St. Roch; nor is she able to render services to the ministry, such as they may judge expedient to reward with the honours of the Peerage.—But she is a virtuous woman, and will make a good and happy wife."

Madame de Chantevilliers was about to make a furious reply. But Groscassand, who

saw that it was raining torrents, and that the interview was likely to be prolonged, attempted to turn off the matter as a jest.

"The carriage of Madame la Comtesse is waiting in the Rue St. Honoré," was the energetic reply of Dauriac. "I was not aware to what species of visits my apartments were about to be subjected. Pardon me if I resume possession of a house, which I am desirous should be sacred to decency and virtue. My wife and myself, at least, are not of a sufficient rank in society to be satisfied with the superficial honours of DECORUM!"

THE RED HOUSE.



THE RED HOUSE.

CHAPTER I.

TOWARDS the end of the reign of the Emperor Paul, and about the middle of the first year of the nineteenth century, four of the afternoon had struck at the church of St. Peter and Paul, whose gilded steeple shoots up over the fortress; when a considerable crowd was assembling before the residence of the General Count Tchermayloff, formerly military commandant of an important town situated in the government of Pultawa.

The attraction of the crowd was arrested by the preparations making in the centre of the court-yard for the infliction of the punishment

of the knout; to which a slave of the General, officiating as family-barber, had been sentenced. Though such a scene be of frequent occurrence at St. Petersburg, it is sure, at all times, to attract a crowd before the house at which it takes place; and such was the case in the instance in question.

The spectators had not long to wait; for towards half-past four, a young man of four and twenty, dressed in the elegant uniform of the staff, his chest glittering with orders, appeared upon the steps at the further end of the court, facing the principal entrance to the apartments of the General. Pausing an instant, he raised his eyes towards a window whose curtains, hermetically closed, did not respond to his curiosity; when perceiving the inutility of indulging further hope, he made a sign to a man wearing a long beard, who was standing near the servants' offices; and immediately a door opened, and there came forth numerous dependents, in the midst of whom was the

culprit about to submit to his sentence, followed by the executioner.

As we have already stated, the criminal was the General's barber; and the executioner, simply the coachman, promoted to his awful functions from his dexterity in handling the whip, which neither diminished the esteem nor friendship of his fellow servants, being well persuaded that the arm and not the heart of Ivan was engaged in the business; and as his arm as well as the rest of his body was the exclusive property of the General, it was not astonishing to find it devoted to such a purpose.—In fact, the corrections, administered by Ivan were preferred to any other, as being more lenient. For he often contrived to filch a stroke or two out of the dozen; unless compelled by those standing by, to be more strict in his reckoning. He even contrived that the extremities of the thongs should reach only the plank, to which the culprit was confined; so that when Ivan himself was doomed

to receive, on his own account, the correction he so frequently administered to others, the officiating executor spared him the galling stripes he had so often spared to *them*. Such mutual forbearance served to sustain the best understanding between Ivan and his comrades, which was never more friendly than at the period of an approaching punishment. It is true that the pain of the first hour would sometimes render the knoutee unjust to the knouter, but all rancorous feeling subsided at the first glass of schnaps quaffed by the executioner to the health of his patient.

The culprit in this instance, was a man of thirty five or six, with red hair and beard, of goodly stature, in whose face one discovered his Greek descent; which, though expressing temerity, had retained the usual character of cunning.

Arrived at the scene of execution, the culprit paused and looked up at the window, to which the eyes of the young officer had already been

directed; then surveying the assembled mass, he staggered as he contemplated the plank upon which he was to submit to his agony. This thrill did not escape the observation of his friend Ivan, who baring his shoulders, said to him, in an under voice, "Courage! Gregory, courage."

"Remember what you promised me!" replied the culprit, with an accent of intense supplication.

"Good, Gregory! But you must not count upon the first lashes, for the aide-de-camp will look on. Towards the end, you shall have reason to thank me."

"Above all, mind the points of the thongs."

"I'll do my best, Gregory!—Trust me!—Do you not know me?"

"Alas! only too well!" replied the culprit.

"What means this delay?"—exclaimed the aide-de-camp.

"I am ready, your Excellency!" replied Ivan.

"A moment, I entreat your high born grace!" cried the culprit; giving the title of *Vache Vausso Korodie*, to flatter the young officer. "I think I see the window of Mademoiselle Vaninka opening."

The aide-de-camp instantly looked towards the window, before alluded to. But not a fold of the curtains was seen to move.

"You deceive yourself!" said the officer, disappointed also in seeing no one at the window; "besides, what has your noble lady to do with this?"

"Pardon me, your Excellency," replied Gregory, "but as it is on her account I am punished—I thought, perhaps, she might take pity on a poor servant."

"Enough!" said the Captain, disappointed by the non-appearance of Vaninka.—"We must begin."

"Directly, Excellence!" replied Ivan; then, turning round to Gregory. "Now, comrade," said he, "prepare!"

Gregory heaved a deep sigh, looked once and again towards the window; when seeing no signs of hope, he laid himself down on the fatal plank. At the same moment two other serfs, selected by Ivan, laid hold of his arms and stretched and strapped them to two opposite posts, so that he lay in a cross like fashion; then, confining his neck in a pillory, and seeing that no one still appeared at the window, the young officer raised his hand, saying—

"Proceed!"

"One moment more, Excellence!" replied Ivan, still temporising, in the vain hope of some sign from the window. "I must undo a knot in the thong, or Gregory will have a right to complain."

The instrument of torture, probably unknown to the reader, is a kind of a whip, of which

the handle is about two feet long, to which is attached a flat leather thong two fingers broad, four feet long, and terminating in a metal ring; from which is prolonged another strap two feet long, and an inch and a half wide, but gradually lessening into a point; which, steeped in milk and afterwards exposed to the sun, becomes as hard and sharp as a penknife. Moreover, the thong is changed at every sixth stroke, lest the blood should soften the leather.

However disinclined for his task, Ivan could no longer delay, for the spectators began to murmur; which, rousing the young officer from his reverie, he gave one more look at the window, and seeing no hope of mercy, turned towards the coachman, and in an imperious voice gave orders for the execution. Unable longer to hesitate, Ivan obeyed; nor did he seek any other pretext for delay. Retiring two steps, the better to strike, and raising himself on the points of his feet,

he flourished the knout over his head, then, suddenly letting it fall upon Gregory's back, managed so dexterously, that the lash whipped itself thrice round the body of the culprit, like the coil of a serpent, while the hardened point struck beneath the plank. Nevertheless, Gregory shrieked aloud, while Ivan, in a loud voice, counted "ONE!"

At this shriek, the young officer again turned towards the window, but in vain. He then mechanically fixed his eyes upon the culprit repeating the word, "one!" The knout had traced three bluish lines upon the shoulders of Gregory.

Ivan again lifted his arm, and with the same dexterity, coiled the thongs three times round the culprit's body, so that he escaped the galling points. Gregory shrieked again, and Ivan counted—

"Two!"

At this stroke, the blood rose to the skin. At the third, it began to trickle; and, at the

fourth it spouted forth, and flew in the face of the young officer; who retiring, wiped his face. Ivan took advantage of this circumstance to count seven, instead of six, which manœuvre escaped the officer's vigilance.

At the ninth stroke, Ivan changed his knout; trusting that he might again, by some fresh subterfuge, spare the suffering culprit, and on resuming, counted eleven, instead of ten. At that instant, a window opposite that of Vaninka opened, and a man of about forty-eight, dressed in a General's uniform, appeared, and with a voice of authority, called out—

"Enough, enough!"—and instantly closed the window.

Upon seeing the General, the young officer carried his hand to his hat, and stood fixed and motionless. But no sooner was the window closed, than he repeated the words of his chief, so that the upraised knout fell without touching the culprit.

"Thank his Excellence, Gregory," said Ivan, folding the thong round his arm, "for he spares you two cuts, which, with my fashion of reckoning, makes four, so that you have received eight instead of twelve. This way, comrades, and release him!"

Poor Gregory was not in a state to thank any one; writhing with pain, he could scarcely support himself. Two mougiks took him by the arms, and followed by Ivan, proceeded to the hospital. Arrived at the entrance, he paused, and perceiving the eyes of the young officer looking piteously upon him.

"Monsieur Fœdor," said he, "thank his High Excellence, the General, for me. As to Mademoiselle Vaninka," said he, in an under voice, "I will find means to thank her myself!"

"What are you muttering?" angrily inquired the young officer, thinking he uttered words of revenge.

"Nothing, noble Sir—nothing!" said Ivan.

"The poor fellow is thanking you, Monsieur Fœdor, for honoring his punishment with your presence. That is all."

"Good!" replied the young man, still suspecting that Ivan had changed the original text. Unwilling, however, to know more, he merely observed—

"If Gregory do not wish this to be repeated, let him drink less—or when drunk; be a little more respectful."

Ivan bowed profoundly, and followed his companions. Fœdor entered the hall, and the crowd withdrew, as little satisfied at the want of probity in Ivan, as with the humanity of the General, who had deprived their eyes of one third of the infliction.

Now that we have presented to the reader some few of the personages of this history, we must make him better acquainted with those who have but briefly appeared, or who are still behind the curtain.

General Count Tchermayloff, (who, after

having been governor of one of the important towns of the Pultawa, was recalled to St. Petersburg by Paul I. who honoured him with unusual esteem,) was a widower, possessing an only daughter, who had inherited the beauty, fortune, and pride of her mother; pretending to descend from one of those Tâtar captains, who, under the orders of Ghengis Khan, invaded Russia, in the thirteenth century. Fate willed that these aristocratical pretensions should be further exaggerated by the education given to Vaninka, by her father. Unable alone to watch over his daughter, General Tchermayloff had selected an English governess; who, instead of chiding the haughty bearing of her pupil, had given it a greater development, by fortifying her innate aristocracy with the deep-rooted principles that render the English nobility the most overbearing in the world.

Among the various studies to which Vaninka devoted herself, there was one which com-

manded her especial attention; the science of her position, if we may so term it. She was well versed in the degrees of nobility, and precedence of the different families of the Empire and could, without erring, give to each the titles due to them; a task somewhat difficult to accomplish in Russia. She indeed was perfectly ignorant of every thing under the rank of an Excellence. As to serfs and slaves, for her they had no existence;—mere animals with beards, ranking in her estimation, with dogs and horses, whose lives she would not have, for an instant, balanced against those interesting animals.

Nevertheless, like most of her countrywomen, she was an accomplished woman. Her features were in perfect harmony with her character:—she was handsome, but of a harsh order of beauty. Her piercing eyes, straight nose, disdainful lips, made an unfavourable impression upon those who first approached her, which vanished with her equals or superiors; among

whom she became a woman, like any other, while to her inferiors, she remained unapproachable as a divinity.

At seventeen, the education of Vaninka was terminated; and her governess, disliking the rude climate of St. Petersburg, retired from her functions. Vaninka was now alone, having no other control than the blind love of her father, of whom she was the only child; and who, in his wild enthusiasm, looked upon her as the acme of human perfection.

Matters stood thus in the family of the general, when he received a letter from a friend of his early youth, written upon his death bed. Banished to his estates in consequence of some differences with Potemkin, Count Romayloff was checked in his career; and unable to reinstate himself in court favour, pined away his existence at a distance of four hundred leagues from St. Petersburg, less on account of his exile, than that it had annihilated the prospects and fortune of his beloved and only son, Fœdor.

The Count, on finding that he was about to leave him alone and unsupported in the world, interceded in the name of their former intimacy with the General; desiring, through his influence with Paul I, to procure him a commission in the army. The General replied, that the son of his friend should find in him a second father. But when these joyful tidings arrived, the Count was no more.

Fœdor, who received the letter, hastened to announce to the General the loss he had sustained, and claim the promised protection. But the General, however eager his protégé, had anticipated his expectations; having already obtained from the Emperor a lieutenancy in the regiment of Semonofskoi, so that Fœdor found himself embarked in his new career on the very day of his arrival.

Though the young officer did but pass through the General's house on his road to the barracks of the Litenoï, he tarried long enough to see Vaninka; who produced a profound im-

pression on his feelings. The heart of Fœdor, teeming with generous passions, already conceived a deep debt of gratitude for the prompt execution of his patron's promises. All about him commanded his acknowledgments. The very beauty of the person presented to him as his sister, acquired new charms, though, notwithstanding that endearing title, she received him with the reserve and haughtiness of a queen. Nevertheless, in the face of that chilling pride, the young officer's heart was profoundly impressed; and his arrival at St. Petersburg was signalized by the dawn of feelings as dear as new to his soul.

As to Vaninka, she scarcely remarked Fœdor. What interest could a young officer without fortune or position obtain in her sight? Her ambition was an alliance with one of the princely houses of Russia; and nothing short of realizing a tale of the Arabian Nights, could enable Fœdor to achieve such a position!

Some days after the first interview, Fœdor

came to take leave of the General, his regiment forming part of the expedition to Italy, under field Marshal Suwarrow; and he was about to stake his life, to render himself worthy of his noble protector.

Whether his elegant uniform enhanced the manly beauty of Fœdor, or whether at the moment of departure a ray of exaltation and hope shed a halo of poetical enthusiasm round the young man, Vaninka, startled at the advantageous change wrought in him, at the invitation of her father, tendered her hand to the youthful soldier.

Such a distinction far exceeded Fœdor's warmest hopes; and he quickly bowed his knee as before a queen, and taking her beautiful hand, carried it to his quivering lips. Slight as was the contact, Vaninka started, as if seared by a hot iron.—Her whole frame trembled, while a deep blush pervaded her cheek.

So abruptly did she withdraw her hand, that

Fœdor, fearing he had given offence, remained kneeling, and casting down his eyes in despair; so that Vaninka, forgetting her pride, was forced to calm his anxiety by a gracious smile. Fœdor rose, his heart bounding with joy; for though on the point of leaving Vaninka, he had never felt so happy in his life.

He departed, indulging in golden dreams; for his horizon, dark or resplendent, was deserving envy. Had he a warrior's end in store, he fancied that a tear of regret might fall from Vaninka's eye; and if glory awaited him, he should return in triumph to St. Petersburg!

The division to which the young officer was attached entered Italy by the gorges of the Tyrol; reaching Verona the 14th. of April, 1799: when Suwarrow, joining the division of General Mélas, took the command of the army. Next day, General Chasteler proposed to him to make a reconnaissance; but Suwarrow replied in amazement;—

"The only reconnaissance I intend to make,

is to march upon the enemy and beat them soundly !"

Suwarrow was prompt in his movements. It was thus he had conquered the Turks at Folkschany and Ismailoff; and in Poland after a few days' campaign, took Praga in a few hours. In acknowledgement for these feats, Catherine sent to the victorious General a crown of oak interwoven with jewels to the amount of six hundred thousand roubles, as well as a Marshal's staff, studded with diamonds. In creating him field marshal, she allowed him to select a regiment which should bear his name; and presented him with an extensive estate of eight thousand serfs, to which he was permitted to retire after his fatigues. What an example for Fœdor!—Suwarrow, the son of a simple soldier, had been brought up at the school of cadets, and like himself begun his career as sub-lieutenant; and why should there not be two Suwarrows?

Suwarrow enjoyed a colossal reputation.

Pious, zealous, indefatigable, living with the simplicity of a Tartar, and fighting with the enthusiasm of a Cossack, he was exactly the man to continue the triumphs of Mélas over the soldiers of the Republic, disheartened by the inept vacillations of Scherer. Besides, the Austro-Russian army, amounting to a hundred thousand men, had opposed to it only thirty thousand Frenchmen.

Suwarrow opened the campaign like a thunder-bolt. On the twentieth of April, he attacked Brescia, which resisted in vain; and after half an hour's cannonade, the entrance by the Pescheria gate was forced, and the Korsakow division of which Fœdor's regiment formed the van, entered the town driving the enemy before them; which, to the number of two thousand men, took refuge in the citadel.

Subdued by an impetuosity with which the French were then little acquainted, and seeing the scaling ladders planted against the ramparts, Brigadier Boucret chose to capitulate;

too happy, in such a precarious position, to obtain terms from his fierce vanquisher. The garrison were of course made prisoners of war.

Suwarrow was the man of all others who knew how to take advantage of a victory. Scarcely was he master of Brescia, the quick reduction of which had spread dismay in the enemy's ranks, when he ordered General Kray to hasten the siege of Pescheria. Kray consequently established his head quarters at Valeggio, equi-distant from Pescheria and Mantua, stretching from the Po to the Lago di Garda, upon the bank of the Mincio; investing both towns at once.

During this interval, the General-in-Chief advancing with the main body of the army, crossed the Aglio in two columns; stationing one under the orders of General Rosenberg in the direction of Bergami, pushing the other under Melas as far as the Senio; while divisions of seven or eight thousand men com-

manded by General Kaim and Hohenzollern, were pushed on towards Placentia and Cremona; following the left bank of the Po, so that the Austro-Russian army advanced extending a front of eighty thousand men upon a line of eighteen leagues.

Seeing these forces advance, triple in number to his own, Scherer, beating a retreat upon his whole line, broke down the bridges upon the Adda, (seeing the impossibility of defending them). Removing his head quarters to Milan, he waited further instructions from the Directory; in answer to a letter in which he frankly admitted his incapacity, and tendered his resignation.

But as his successor was still on the road, while Suwarrow, rapidly advancing, he shrank from the responsibility that weighed upon him, and resigned the command to more skilful hands. The General he selected was Moreau; about to oppose those self-same

Russians in whose ranks he was hereafter doomed to fall !

This unexpected nomination was proclaimed amidst the acclamations of the army ! He whose magnificent campaign upon the Rhine had won for him the surname of the French Fabius, was saluted with the unanimous cheers of the troops—who cried aloud, " Long live Moreau, the Saviour of Italy !"

But this enthusiasm, great as it was, did not blind Moreau to the terrible position in which he stood. Liable to be outflanked at each extremity of his line, it became necessary to present a parallel line to the Russian army : so that, to shew a front, he was compelled to deploy from the Lake of Lecco to Pizzighitone, nearly a line of twenty leagues. It was true he could retire upon Piedmont, concentrate his troops at Alexandria, and there await the promised succours of the Directory. But by such an operation, he exposed the army of Naples,

isolating it before the enemy. He therefore resolved to defend the passage of the Adda, so as to give time to Dessolle's division to come up, sent by Massena to defend his left; while that of Gauthier, ordered to evacuate Tuscany, was advancing by forced marches to join his right.

He himself proceeded to the centre, determined to defend the fortified bridge of Cassano, whose head was covered by the Ritorto canal, occupied by the numerous artillery of the advanced posts.

As prudent as he was courageous, Moreau made sure, in case of a check, of his retreat towards the Appenines and Genoese coast.

The dispositions were scarcely terminated, when the indefatigable Suwarrow entered Triveglio, just as Moreau received the news of the taking of Bergamo. On the 25th. of April he perceived the vanguard of the enemy.

The same day, the Russian general divided his army into three strong columns, corres-

ponding to the three principal points of the French line, but each double the strength of the troops they were about to encounter. The right column, under General Wukassowich, moved towards the lake of Lecco, where General Serrurier was awaiting him. The left column, commanded by Melas, took up its ground facing the entrenchments of Cassano. Lastly, the Austrian division of generals Zopf and Ott, forming the centre, were concentrated at Canonia, ready at the given signal to fall upon Vaprio. The Russian and Austrian army bivouacked within gun-shot of the French advanced posts.

On the same evening, Fœdor, whose regiment belonged to the Chasteler division, wrote to General Tchermayloff, as follows :—

"We are close upon the French. There will be a great battle to-morrow; and I shall be either a lieutenant, or among the slain."

On the 26th of April, the cannon roared, at dawn of day, from both extremities of the line.

The extreme left of the French was attacked by the grenadiers of Prince Bagration. The extreme right, by General Seckendorff, who, detached from the camp of Triveglio, marched upon Crema. The two assaults had very different results. The Bagration grenadiers were repulsed with considerable loss; while Seckendorff drove the French from Crema, reconnoitring as far as the bridge of Lodi. Fœdor was deceived in his hopes. His division was not engaged, and his regiment remained stationary, waiting orders which never arrived. Suwarrow had not yet determined his movements.

During the night, Moreau learning the advantages obtained by Seckendorff on his extreme right, had ordered Serrurier to leave at Lecco, (a post easily defended,) half of the eighteenth light brigade and a detachment of dragoons, and to fall back on the centre with the remainder of his men. Serrurier received

about two in the morning, the orders which he immediately executed.

The Russians, on their side, lost no time in taking advantage of the darkness of the night. Wukassowich had re-established the bridge broken down by the French at Brevio, while General Chasteler constructed another, two miles below the castle of Trezzo. These two bridges had both been repaired and constructed without the knowledge of the French outposts. Surprised early in the morning by two Austrian divisions who, masked by the village of San Gervasio, had gained the right bank of the Addio without being perceived, the soldiers entrusted with the defence of the castle of Trezzo, abandoning it and beating a retreat, the Austrians pursued them as far as Pozzo. There, the French suddenly faced about. It was Serrurier and his troops on their march from Lecco; who, hearing a cannonade in their rear, halted, and obeying the

first law of war, marched towards the field of action, rallied the garrison of Trezzo, and took the offensive; sending an aide-de-camp to Moreau to warn him of the movement he had thought proper to make.

The action commenced between the French and Austrians with the most unheard of fury; the soldiers of Buonaparte having adopted a custom in the early Italian campaigns, which they were loth to forsake, that of beating the troops of his imperial majesty whenever they met them. The numerical superiority was however such, that the French troops began to waver; when loud cries from the rear announced the arrival of a reinforcement. It was General Grenier who, sent forward by Moreau, arrived at the critical moment! Part of the French division reinforced the columns doubling the divisions of the centre; while the other extended itself in order to envelop the enemy's generals, when the charge beating on the whole line, the French grenadiers recon-

quered the field so often taken and retaken. A reinforcement came up to the Austrians, (the division of the Marquis of Chasteler), so that the numbers were in favour of the enemy. Grenier quickly brought up his wing to strengthen his centre, and Serrurier retreating, fell back upon Pozzo, where he awaited the enemy.

Here, was concentrated the whole brunt of the battle. Thrice was the village of Pozzo taken and retaken; when, at last the French, attacked for the fourth time by a force double their own, were compelled to evacuate the place. In the last attack, an Austrian colonel was mortally wounded; but on the other hand, General Beker, who commanded the French rear guard, refusing to retreat and being surrounded by a few men, was forced to surrender his sword to a young Russian officer belonging to the regiment of Semenofskoi; who, after delivering up his prisoner to his men, returned to the combat.

The two French generals had agreed upon the village of Vaprio as the rallying point; but in the confusion of evacuating Pozzo, so effective a charge was made by the Austrian cavalry, that Serrurier was cut off and forced to retire with two thousand five hundred men upon Vendorio; while Grenier alone reached the point agreed upon, halting at Vaprio to shew a new front to the enemy.

A sharp engagement was now going on in the centre. Melas, with eighteen or twenty thousand men, had attacked the fortified posts established at the bridge of Cassano, and the Ritorto Canal. As early as seven in the morning, just as Moreau had sent off Grenier's division, Mélas in person at the head of three battalions of Austrian grenadiers, attacked the advanced works; and for two hours, there was a terrible carnage. Repulsed three times, leaving fifteen hundred men at the foot of the fortifications, the Austrians returned to the charge; every time reinforced with fresh troops,

and headed and encouraged by Mélas, determined to avenge his old defeats. At last, attacked for the fourth time, and forced in their retrenchments the French, disputing every inch of ground, retired to their second line of defence, which was commanded by Moreau in person.

During two hours did they fight, man to man, while the artillery vomited death, almost muzzle to muzzle. The Austrians rallied again, charging with the bayonet; and for want of scaling-ladders, piled up the bodies of their fallen companions, and thus attained the parapet.

There was not a moment to lose. Moreau ordered a retreat; and while the French recrossed the Adda, he in person covered their passage with a single battalion of grenadiers, of whom only twenty survived. Three of his aides-de-camp fell at his side. But the retreat was effected without disorder; and he then retired, still shewing a front to the enemy, who

set foot on the bridge at the moment he reached the opposite shore.

The Austrians hastened in pursuit, but suddenly a loud explosion was heard predominating over that of the artillery. The second arch of the bridge had been mined and blown up; and in the vacant space, there fell a shower of fragments of stone and human beings. At that moment, when Moreau had placed fresh obstacles between him and Mélas, he perceived the divisions of General Grenier flying in disorder; compelled to evacuate Vaprio, and pursued by the Austrio-Russian army of Zopf, Ott and Chasteler. Moreau immediately commanded a change of front; and presenting a new line to this new enemy, at the moment he least expected it, succeeded in rallying the troops of Grenier, and re-sustained the battle. While he countermarched to join him, Mélas re-established the bridge, and quickly crossed the river.

Moreau now found himself attacked on all

sides by a force tripling his own. It was then that all the officers implored him to think of a retreat, for on the safety of his person depended the preservation of Italy to France. Moreau resisted, well knowing the terrible consequences of the battle he had just lost; and a chosen few surrounded him, and forming a close square, retired, while the remainder of the army sacrificed themselves to secure the retreat of him whose genius they considered their only remaining hope!

The battle lasted three hours longer; during which, the rear guard performed wonders. At last, Mélas, seeing his enemy escape him, and feeling that his troops were nearly exhausted, relinquished the contest, and halted on the left bank of the Adda; echeloning in the villages of Imago, Gorgonzota and Cassano, and remaining master of the field of battle, upon which lay two thousand five hundred Frenchmen, and one hundred pieces of cannon.

That evening, Suwarrow having invited General Beker to sup with him, inquired who had taken him prisoner. Beker replied, that it was the young officer who had entered the first into the village of Pozzo. Suwarrow demanded the name of the regiment, and found it was that of Semenofskoi ; when the General-in-chief immediately took steps for the discovery of the name of the young man. Shortly afterwards, "Lieutenant Fœdor Romayloff" was announced, bringing to Suwarrow the sword of General Beker. The General invited him to sup with him and his prisoner.

The following day, Fœdor wrote anew to his protector:—"I have kept my word:—I am a lieutenant, and the Field Marshal has solicited the Emperor to grant me the cross of Saint Vladimir!"

On the 28th of April, Suwarrow entered Milan (which Moreau had just abandoned to retire behind the Tesino,) and exhibited in all

the public places of the capital the follow
proclamation, singularly illustrative of
character of the Muscovite hero :

"The victori army of the apostolical E
peror is here, fi ng for the preservation
the holy churcl the Clergy, Nobility,
ancient governm of Italy. People of Ita
unite with us fo the sake of God and
faith, for our a y has marched to Mi
and Placentia, to bring you succours."

The dearly bought victories of the Trel
and Novi, succeeded to that of Cassa
and left Suwarrow so weakened, that he co
not avail himself of the advantages he h
gained. Besides, at the moment the Russi
General was about to take the field, a n
project arrived from the Aulic Council
Vienna. The allied powers had decided up
the invasion of France; and pointing out
each general the route he was to purs
ordered Suwarrow to enter France by t

of Switzerland, where the Archduke would yield him his positions, and fall back upon the Lower Rhine.

The troops with which Suwarrow, leaving Moreau and Macdonald in front of the Austrians, was to manœuvre against Massena, consisted of thirty thousand Russians; with thirty thousand more, detached from Tolstoy's army of reserve, in Gallicia, which were to enter Switzerland, under General Korsakoff; about thirty thousand Austrians, commanded by General Hotze, and lastly, five or six thousand French emigrants, under the Prince of Condé,—the whole amounting to ninty-five thousand men.

Fœdor had been wounded in entering into Novi; but Suwarrow healed his wound by a second cross, so that the young officer, comforted by the military distinctions he had achieved, was able to join the army, when, on the 18th of September, it made its move-

ment towards Salvedra, and penetrated the valley of Tesino.

All, till then, had gone prosperously; and as they ranged the plains of Italy, Suwarrow had reason to be satisfied with the courage and devotion of his soldiers. But when, on quitting luxuriant Lombardy, watered by its beautiful rivers, they beheld before them the steep summits of St. Gothard, their enthusiasm became extinct; their energy failed, and dismal misgivings beset the wild children of the north. Already they began to murmur; when suddenly—the van halted, declaring they would not proceed further. In vain did Fœdor, who commanded a company, implore his men to show a good example by marching; they threw down their arms, and lay down beside them on the way. Simultaneously with this breach of subordination, fresh murmurs broke forth in the rear of the army, increasing like a hurricane. It was Suwarrow, passing from the rear to the front, accom-

panied by these cries of mutiny, which rose along the whole line as he presented himself. Arrived at the head of the column, the cries deepened into imprecations.

Suwarrow instantly addressed the soldiers, with the barbarous eloquence which heretofore had wrought such miracles. But cries of—

"Retreat! Retreat!"—stifled his voice.

He now caused the most mutinous to be seized and knouted, till subdued by that savage punishment. But in spite of all exhortations, the cries continued; and the Field Marshal saw that all was lost, if he did not devise some effective means of reducing the factious. — He instantly advanced towards Fœdor.

"Captain!" said he, "take eight corporals, and dig a pit."

Fœdor gazed astonished at the General, as if to demand an explanation of this unusual order.

"Do what I bid you," persisted the F
Marshal.

He obeyed. he eight corporals set
work. Ten mi es afterwards the pit
dug. In a m nt, Suwarrow tore off
epaulettes, and ders, and threw them
his sword into e trench, and jumping
himself, exclaim —

"Cover me! I am abandoned by
soldiers. They are no longer my childr
I am no longer their father! I have nothi
left but to die!"

On hearing these strange words, the R
sian grenadiers threw themselves into
pit, weeping aloud; and having brought
their chief in their arms, they knelt
pardon, and implored him to lead them
the enemy.

"Good!" exclaimed Suwarrow. "I
cognise my children again. To the enemy!"

Loud huzzas, replied to these words. S
warrow re-attired himself, during which occ

pation, the mutineers crawled upon the ground and kissed his feet. No sooner had he replaced his epaulettes on his shoulders, and his crosses on his breast, than he mounted his horse, followed by the whole army, every soldier swearing to die rather than abandon his father.

The same day, Suwarrow attacked Aerolo. But ill-omened days were in progress. The conqueror of Cassano, the Trebia and Novi, had exhausted his fortunes in the plains of Italy. During twelve hours, six hundred Frenchmen kept in check three thousand Russian grenadiers, under the walls of the town, the night arriving without Suwarrow being able to drive them away. Next day, he moved forward his forces to envelop this handful of men; but the weather becoming tempestuous, a cold and drenching rain beat in the faces of the Russians. The French took advantage of this circumstance, and retreated; evacuating the valley of Urseren

and having passed the Reuss, they took up a position upon the heights of the Grimsel. The object of the Russians was now partly obtained. They possessed St. Gothard, though it appeared probable that the French would retake it, and cut off his retreat.

Suwarrow felt himself once more triumphant. Indifferent as to what he left behind, he reached Andermatt, crossed the valley of the Uri, and found Lecourbe defending the defiles of the Pont du Diable, with fifteen hundred men.

Here the strife was renewed. During three days, fifteen hundred Frenchmen kept three thousand Russians in check. Suwarrow roared like an entrapped lion, for he saw that his star was on the decline.

On the fourth day, he learned that General Korsakoff, who preceded him and whom he was about to join, had been beaten by Molitor; and that Massena had retaken Zurich, and occupied the canton of Glaris. Leaving the

valley of the Reuss, he wrote to Korsakoff and Jallachich.

"I hasten to repair your errors. Hold as firm as rocks. You shall answer with your heads for every step you fall back."

The aide-de-camp communicated, at the same time, a verbal plan of battle to the Russian and Austrian generals, two of whom, Linsken and Jallachich, were ordered to attack the French line, each on his side, and effect their junction in the valley of Glaris; into which, Suwarrow would make his way by the valley of Klon Thal, so as to hem in Molitor between two ramparts of iron.

So certain was Suwarrow of success, that upon gaining the borders of the lake of Klon Thal, he sent to summon Molitor to surrender, seeing that he was surrounded on all sides. Molitor replied that his plan had failed; for that he had beaten the generals of the allies, one after the other, and forced them to retire into the Grisons; and that on

the contrary, as Massena was advancing by Muotta, it was Suwarrow himself who was placed between two fires. Molitor, consequently summoned him to lay down his arms !

On receiving this unexpected answer, Suwarrow thought he was dreaming, but was soon made aware of the imminent peril of remaining in those defiles. Rushing upon the point of the bayonet, and closing the defiles with twelve hundred men, the General kept at bay eighteen thousand Russians for a space of eight hours. At length, night arrived ; Molitor evacuated Klon Thal, and retired upon the Linth, in order to defend the bridges of Nœfels and Mollis. The troops of the old Marshal, rushed like a torrent upon Glaris and Mitlodi, and when he learnt the truth of his position, that Jallachich and Linsken were beaten and dispersed ; that Massena was advancing upon Schwitz, and that General Rosenberg, to whom he had

entrusted the defence of the bridge of Muotta, had been compelled to fall back, he saw himself in the dilemma in which he thought to have placed Molitor.

There was no time to lose in retreating. Suwarrow threw himself into the defiles of Engi Schwanden, and Elm; hastening his march so urgently, that he abandoned his wounded, and his cannon. The French closely pursued, driving them sometimes amid precipices, at others, through the clouds.

Armies now followed the track of the chamois-hunter, with bare feet, and creeping rather than marching. Three different nations were confronted in the regions of the eagle; as if willing to ascend nearer to the supreme being, in order that He might the better dispose the justice of their cause. The mountains seemed like so many volcanoes; while the crystal waters of the cascades descended

in gory floods into the valleys, and heaps of human limbs rolled down the precipices. Such was the harvest of death, in a spot where life itself was almost unknown, that the vultures become dainty from satiety, feasted, according to the traditions of the country, upon human eyes!

Suwarrow, at length succeeded in rallying his troops in the environs of Lindeau; and ordered Korsakoff to come up, and occupy a position at Bregenz. But his united forces amounted only to thirty thousand men; the remainder of eighty thousand, the contingent furnished by Paul to the coalition, constituting three armies, each stronger than that of Massena, had been beaten in fifteen days.

Suwarrow, furious to have been subdued by the republicans of whose defeat he had proclaimed himself so sure, attributed his failure to the Austrians; declaring that before he co-operated further with the coalition,

he waited the instructions of the Emperor, to whom he had communicated the disaffection of the allies.

Paul issued instant instructions for the return of the army to St. Petersburg, where a triumphant entrée awaited the Field Marshal. An ukase announced that Suwarrow was to reside for life in the imperial palace, and that a monument was to be erected to him in one of the public squares of the capital.

Fœdor also was about to return. Whenever there had been danger to encounter in the plains of Italy, the gorges of the Tesino, or the snows of Mount Pragel, he was ever the foremost, so that his name was among those which stood prominently forth for honor and reward; and Suwarrow knew too well the value of merit to bestow riches and honour undeserved.

Fœdor returned, therefore, to his noble protector, having fully accomplished his promise. The Field Marshal had taken him into favour;

and no one could say how far such friendshi might lead, for the Emperor worshipped hir as a warrior of ancient times.

No one, however, could place much depend ence upon the character of Paul I. Such wer its caprices, that Suwarrow, upon arriving a Riga, received a letter from the hands of privy councillor, signifying, in the name of the Emperor, that having tolerated acts of in- subordination among the soldiers, he was de- prived of all his honours, and forbidden to appear in the presence of the Emperor !

This news fell like lightning upon the head of the old warrior; already writhing under his late reverses, which, like the evening storm, darkened the close of a splendid day. Assem- bling his officers in the square of Riga, like a father quitting his family, he bad them a mournful farewell; and, shaking by the hand the different generals and colonels, left them free to follow their destination; then, threw himself into a sledge, and travelled night

and day, till he arrived incognito in that capital into which he was to have entered as a conqueror. A fortnight afterwards, he died of a broken heart, at the residence of one of his nieces, who had afforded him shelter!

Fœdor, in as much haste as the Marshal, had also reached St. Petersburg without previous announcement. Having no connections in the capital, his thoughts and hopes were concentrated upon one alone; and he proceeded at once to the Nevskoï perspective, where, on the border of the Catherine canal, resided General Tchermayloff. Having jumped out of his carriage, he rushed through the court, cleared the stairs, reached the door of the ante-chamber; and finding himself among the valets and dependents of the house, inquired for the General. They instantly pointed to the door of the dining-room, where he was breakfasting with his daughter.

Fœdor's courage now failed him, and he was fain to support himself against the wall. About

to see Vaninka once ag
soul for whom he had a
trembled lest he should f
her he had left. At tha
of the dining-room su
Vaninka appeared. At
uttered an exclamation,
the General, exclaimed,
Fœdor!" with that deep-
which is never to be mist

"Welcome, welcome!
extending his arms; an
have fallen at the feet
the arms of her father, at
his first impulse was
gratitude, and he threw
of the General, to confe
how confess it before
mutual? even as on h
seat of war, Fœdor knelt
But the haughty girl, un
spontaneous dictates of

became cold and stately as a statue of alabaster,—a work of pride, begun by nature and finished by education. Fœdor kissed her hand, which was cold and trembling. His heart sank within him.

"Well, Vaninka?" said the General, "why so reserved with one who has caused us so much terror, and so much joy? Fœdor, embrace my daughter!"

The young man rose; but stood motionless, hoping that another permission might confirm that of the General.

"Did you not hear my father?" said Vaninka, smiling, unable however to repress the agitation which her trembling voice divulged.

Fœdor gently pressed her lips with his own, and as he held her hand, could almost believe that, from an impulse independent of her will, she had slightly pressed his arm. A feeble exclamation escaped his bosom. On casting his eyes upon Vaninka, it was now his turn

to be alarmed at her pallid face; her lips being colourless as those of the dead. The General now bid Fœdor sit down, and Vaninka returned to her place, which being with her back towards the light, her agitation was unperceived by her father.

During breakfast, Fœdor was required to relate the feats and adventures of the campaign begun under the ardent sun of Italy, and ending upon the ice-bound mountains of Switzerland. As the news-papers in Russia are under a severe censorship of the press, the successes only, and not the reverses of Suwarrow were known. Fœdor related the former with becoming modesty; the latter, with perfect frankness. The profound interest of the General in this recital, is easy to be imagined; and the epaulettes of Fœdor and his breast glittering with orders, were contradictions of the excessive humility with which the young officer accomplished his task. But the General, too generous to be deterred

by the reverses of Suwarrow, had already paid a visit to the dying Marshal, and obtained his testimony to the prowess of his young protégé; and it was now his time to enumerate the feats of the gallant officer during the campaign. Tchermayloff ended by stating, that he should forthwith solicit the Emperor to place him on his staff; and Fœdor was about to kneel at his feet, when the General seized him in his arms, and to convince him of the certainty of his appointment, decided that very day on the apartment he should occupy in the house.

Next day, the General returned from the palace of St. Michael, announcing the success of his application to the Emperor. Fœdor had now attained the height of his ambition. From that instant, he was installed a member of the General's family. To live under the same roof with Vaninka,—to see her every hour,—to sit with her at the same table, exceeded his utmost hopes. He had nothing further to desire or hope. On her own part, Vaninka,

proud as she was, had conceived the deepest interest for Fœdor. When parted from him, her womanly pride could not refrain from indulging in the hopes of a career of glory for the young officer, so as to lessen the distance that seemed to separate them from each other. This was now accomplished; and a more tender sentiment, soon replaced her early interest in his favour. Still, to all appearance, Vaninka remained cold and indifferent, for such was her nature. She meant, at some future day, to manifest her attachment for Fœdor; but till then, did not choose him even to guess that he was beloved.

Thus proceeded matters for several months; and the position which at first seemed the acme of happiness, became a source of misery to Fœdor. With a heart overflowing with love, and seeing no one but her whom he so madly adored, to disguise the powerful emotions of his heart was an effort all but impossible. Vaninka, seeing that Fœdor strove

in vain to keep his secret, determined to forestall the confession which must soon escape his lips.

One day, finding themselves alone, on perceiving the fruitless efforts of Fœdor to suppress his feelings, she frankly addressed him.

"You love me then, Fœdor?" said she, calmly.

"Forgive me, forgive me!"—replied the young man, clasping his hands.

"Why ask pardon? Is not your love sincere?"

"The more so, that it is utterly hopeless."

"Not hopeless!" cried Vaninka. "My father loves you like his son!"

"And what then?" exclaimed Fœdor. "Would he ever give me your hand? Would *you* even consent?"

"Are you not noble, both in heart and blood?" replied Mademoiselle Tchermayloff. "You have no fortune, it is true; but I am rich enough for both."

"You do not look upon me then with indifference?" demanded the young soldier, gaining courage.

"I prefer you to all the world."

Fœdor was utterly overcome by this avowal.

"I tremble to offend you!" cried he; "command me, and I obey you. What must I do?"

"Seek the consent of my father to our union!"

"You authorise me then?"

"I do—on one condition!"

"Speak, speak!"

"That my father shall never know I desired you to take the step, and that you will reveal to no one the confession I have made you. Happen what may, you must not rely upon more on my part, than the promises I have made you."

"Any thing you desire!" replied Fœdor. "You have already granted me a thousand times more than I dared to hope. Should

your father refuse, it is enough that you will share my grief!"

"It will be otherwise, I trust," said Vaninka, presenting her hand to the young officer, which he fervently pressed to his lips. "Let us hope, and persevere!"

Vaninka now left the room; Fœdor remaining more agitated and trembling than herself.

The following day, Fœdor entreated an interview of the General. He was received as cordially and frankly as usual; but at the first words pronounced by Fœdor, his face assumed a forbidding aspect. Still, the expression of such real love, so constant, so impassioned, the stimulus to all those deeds of valour which the General had so warmly applauded, could not be despised. The General held out his hand; and almost equally agitated, told him that, during his absence, being completely unconscious of his attachment to his daughter, he had, upon the solicitation of the Emperor, given his pledge to the son of a Privy Councillor. The

only stipulation made by the General on the occasion being that he should not be separated from his daughter till she attained the age of eighteen. Vaninka, therefore, had only five months more to remain under the paternal roof.

Fœdor's position was indeed critical! In Russia, any desire expressed by the Emperor is held equal to a command; and no human being dares contest its execution. So deeply was the despair of Fœdor painted in his countenance, that the General, full of sympathy in his affliction, involuntarily extended his arms, into which Fœdor rushed, unable to suppress his emotion. The General then questioned him as to his daughter. But remembering his promise to Vaninka, Fœdor replied that he acted of his own accord; and this assurance tranquillized the old General, who feared for a moment, that he had made two victims, instead of one.

At the usual hour of dinner, Vaninka found

"You ask my intentions? Alas! what remains for me to do, except to manifest my gratitude to my kind protector, to fly to St. Petersburg, and pray that some friendly ball may release me from my misery!"

"You are mad!" replied Vaninka, with an expression of triumphant superiority; for, from that moment, she felt her ascendancy over Fœdor, and knew that she should be sovereign of his existence.

"Then advise and command me. Am I not your slave?"

"You must remain here!" said Vaninka.

"Remain?"

"Yes; it is only a woman or a child who yields thus readily. A man, if worthy the name, resists to the last!"

"Resist whom?—your father?—never!"

"Who tells you to resist my father? It is against the march of events, you must stand firm. Before my father, control your feelings, and he will think you have mastered them. As I

At eleven, a sledge drew up to the door, from which Fœdor stepped out, and immediately proceeded to his apartment; where he threw himself upon the sofa, depressed by the weight of his thoughts. About midnight, he heard a knock at the door. It was Annouschka, to announce that her mistress desired to see him immediately. Though little expecting such a summons, Fœdor instantly obeyed. He found Vaninka apparelled in a white robe, pale and motionless as a statue.

Fœdor paused at the door.

"Approach!" said she, in a voice of perfect composure, Annouschka having closed the door. "Tell me," said Vaninka, "what said my father to your demand?"

Fœdor related all that had taken place, and while the proud girl listened, her lips became pale as death.—As to Fœdor, feverish and excited, he was all but frantic.

"And now, tell me your intentions?" said Vaninka, with her usual deliberate voice.

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am supposed to be unacquainted with your views, I shall not be suspected. I will demand two years' delay, which will not be refused me. Who can foretell the course of events in two years?—The Emperor may die!—He to whom I am given may die!"

"But if they exact immediate compliance?"

"Exact of *me!*" interrupted Vaninka, the colour rushing into her cheeks. "Who has a right to exact of me?—my father? He loves me too well! The Emperor? He has too many causes of anxiety in his own family to wish to disturb the peace of others. But there remains for me a last resource, even when all others are exhausted. The Neva flows close at hand, and its waters are deep!"

Fœdor shuddered; for the contracted lips and brow of the young girl evinced such resolution of character, that it seemed impossible to soften her firmness of purpose.

Fœdor was too willing to approve the project proposed by Vaninka, to start any new

objections. Besides, had he dared, her promise to requite him for his dissimulation in public had removed all further scruples, Vaninka by her firmness of character exercised an influence even over the General. Fœdor, therefore, scrupulously obeyed her wishes, while in the gratification of her will and pride, her love seemed to be more intense.

A few days after this nocturnal interview, the infliction of the knout, to which we have alluded, took place ; of which Gregory was the victim, upon a complaint made by Vaninka to her father.

Fœdor, in his office of aide-de-camp, was compelled to preside at this execution ; though he little heeded the threat pronounced by the culprit on his withdrawing. Ivan, the coachman, after officiating as executioner, acted the surgeon, by applying a wash to the galled shoulders of Gregory that could not fail to heal them. He remained in the infirmary for three days, during which he meditated projects

of vengeance. On resuming his duties, all except himself had forgotten what had passed, and had Gregory been a genuine Russian, he would have quickly overlooked a chastisement too frequent among the Muscovites to be deemed a cause for revenge.

But Gregory, as we have before mentioned, had Greek blood in his veins. Though a slave, on account of his functions, he was admitted to a greater familiarity with the General than the other dependents of the house. In all countries of the world, barbers have peculiar privileges with those upon whom they operate; arising probably from the fact of holding their existence between their finger and thumb during ten minutes every day. Gregory enjoyed the usual immunities of his profession; and in his daily functions with the General, did not fail to make use of his time.

One day, the General having to attend a review, Gregory was summoned early; and while the razor of the barber swept magically

over his cheek, Fœdor became the accidental subject of conversation. The barber professed warm admiration of the young soldier; when the General, reminding him of the correction inflicted on him at the instigation of the aide-de-camp, inquired whether, in the person he defined as a model of perfection, there existed some slight defect to cast a shade upon such great and brilliant qualities?

Gregory replied that, with the exception of pride, he thought Fœdor irreproachable.

"Pride?" exclaimed the astonished old man. "The vice of all others from which I thought him exempt!"

"I mean perhaps ambition," replied Gregory.

"Ambition?" reiterated the General. "Surely it was no proof of ambition to enter my service, when after his conduct in the last campaign, he might have entered the household of the Emperor?"

"There is ambition and ambition," observed

Gregory, smiling. "Some aspire to high office, some to a brilliant alliance. Some like to be the creators of their own fortunes, some make a stepping-stone of their wives, in which case, they sometimes look higher than they ought."

"What mean you?" exclaimed the General, beginning to perceive the implication of the barber.

"I mean, Sir, that some men, taking advantage of their influence over their patrons, aspire to a higher position; as if that in which they already stood rendered them giddy!"

"Beware, Gregory!" replied the General, becoming agitated; "beware!—for you will be obliged to prove your words!"

"By St. Basil, General, there is no fear when one speaks the truth. I say nothing but what I can prove!"

"You persist in asserting that Fœdor makes love to my daughter?"

"I did not say so, General!" replied Gre-

gory, with his usual Greek duplicity, "it was your excellence!"

"Still it is what you meant to imply. Come speak out, be frank!"

"I admit, then, your Excellence, that it is what I meant to say."

"And you think their love mutual?"

"Between ourselves, General, I fear so!"

"On what ground? Speak!"

"First of all, Monsieur Fœdor never misses an opportunity of speaking to Mademoiselle Vaninka."

"They live in the same house, would you have them ungracious to each other?"

"When Mademoiselle Vaninka returns late from a party, if by chance Monsieur Fœdor have not accompanied your Excellence, he is always ready to hand Mademoiselle Vaninka from the carriage"

"Fœdor waits for *me*—it is his duty!" said the General, beginning to think the suspicions

of his serf slightly founded. "He waits for me, because at any hour of the night or day, I may be in want of his services."

"Every day Monsieur Fœdor visits Mademoiselle Vaninka; a favour hitherto unknown in your Excellency's family"

"It is I who send him!" replied the old gentleman.

"During the day, your Excellence," observed Gregory, but—at night?"

"At night?" exclaimed the General, abruptly rising, so agitated that he nearly fell.

"Yes, your Excellence, at midnight!" replied the serf. "Since I must make good my word, I will tell all. Even with the chance of another knouting worse than the former, I will no longer suffer my good old master to be deceived.

"Take heed of what you say, slave; for I know your nation's failing! should your accusation prove an act of vengeance and not found-

ed upon proofs palpable and positive, you shall receive the chastisement of a vile calumniator!"

"I willingly consent to it!" replied Gregory.

"So you saw Fœdor enter, by night, my daughter's room?"

"No, General, not enter! I saw him come out of it!"

"When?"

"A quarter of an hour ago, when coming hither to wait upon your Excellence!

"You lie!" said the General raising his fist upon the serf.

"This is against our agreement, your Excellence," said Gregory. "I am to be punished only in the absence of proof."

"But where is your proof?"

"I have told you!"

"Do you think I will believe your mere assertion?"

"No! but you will surely believe your own eyes."

"How so?"

"The first time Monsieur Fœdor remains in the apartment of Mademoiselle Vaninka past midnight I will apprise your Excellence. You may then judge for yourself. But as far as this, the result of my disclosure to your Excellence seems but of little advantage to me."

"How so?"

"If I cannot bring proofs, I am to receive the chastisement of a slanderer; but if I do, what is to be my reward?"

"A thousand roubles and your liberty!"

"Agreed then!" said Gregory, replacing the razors in their case. "I trust that, before a week shall have expired, you will do me ustice."

The serf now departed, leaving the General persuaded of his impending misfortune. From that moment, the old man listened to every word, examined every gesture exchanged between his daughter and the young officer. But nothing seemed to justify his vigilance

on the contrary, Vaninka appeared more cold and reserved than ever.

A week passed away. On the night of the ninth, about two in the morning, there was a knock at the General's door: it was Gregory!

"If your Excellence choose to enter his daughter's apartment, he will find Monsieur Fœdor," said the barber with a smile.

The General turned pale, and in silence followed his serf to Vaninka's door, where he motioned him to retire. Gregory concealed himself in an angle of the corridor.

No sooner did the General think himself alone, than he knocked; but all was still. Vaninka was possibly asleep, and knocking again, he heard her voice gently inquire, "Who is there?"

"It is I!" said the General in great agitation.

"Annouschka!" said his daughter to her foster-sister, who was sleeping in the adjoining room, "here is my father. A moment, dearest father, and the door shall be opened."

The General waited patiently; for so firm was his daughter's voice, that he thought the serf must be mistaken. At last, the door opened, and looking around him, the General discerned no one in the first room.

Vaninka was reposing, a little paler perhaps than usual, but perfectly calm; her lips possessing that grateful smile which never failed to brighten them on seeing her father.

"To what am I indebted for the happiness of seeing you at this unaccustomed hour of the night?" said she.

"I have something of importance to ask you," said the General; "and in spite of the hour, trust you will forgive my breaking your rest."

"Dearest father, you are ever welcome, at any hour, either night or day," she replied, and the General looking round, felt convinced of the impossibility of there being any one concealed in the first room. The second was still to be examined.

"I am listening, father," said Vaninka, after a moment's silence.

"We are not alone," replied the General; "and it is important we should not be overheard."

"You need not fear, Annouschka," said Vaninka.

"In that case," replied the General, advancing towards the smaller room, "Annouschka, go to the corridor, and watch that nobody approaches."

As he pronounced these words, he searched carefully about him, and saw there could be nobody in the room.

Annouschka obeyed, and the General having followed her to the door, returned to the bedside of his daughter.

The old man held out his hand, which his child affectionately grasped.

"Dearest child, I have something of importance to ask you," said he. "You will soon

be eighteen, the age at which we Russians usually marry our daughters."

He paused, to observe the impression these words might produce. But her hand remained calm within his own.

"For this year past," said he, "I have promised your hand—"

"May I ask to whom?" coldly inquired Vaninka.

"To the son of Counsellor R——. What think you of him?"

"I have heard him called a good and noble young man," replied Vaninka; "but I know nothing more of him. Has he not been three years in garrison at Moscow?"

"He has," said the General; "and in three months will return."

Vaninka remained silent.

"Have you nothing more to answer?" inquired her father.

"I have a favour to ask you."

"Name it, my dear child!"

"I do not wish to marry before I am twenty."

"And why not?"

"I have made a vow to that effect."

"But if circumstances render it necessary to break that vow, so that the marriage should take place?"

"Explain yourself!" replied Vaninka.

"Fœdor adores you," said the General, looking earnestly at his daughter.

"I know it," replied Vaninka, with as much indifference as before.

"When did he avow his passion?"

"Yesterday."

"And you answered him—"

"That he must instantly depart."

"Did he consent, Vaninka?"

"He did."

"Is he gone then?"

"Yes!"

"But," said the General, "he was with me at ten o'clock?"

"And he left me at midnight," replied Vaninka.

"Ah!" said the General, breathing freely again, "you are a dutiful child, Vaninka, and freely do I grant your request. Remember, however, that it is the Emperor who has decided your marriage."

"I am, I hope, too obedient a daughter to rebel against my father's wishes."

"Good, my dear child!—So Fœdor has confessed all?"

"All!"

"You knew that he had spoken to me previously?"

"I knew it!"

"And you heard from him that your hand was already engaged?"

"I did."

"Yet he consented to go! He is a good

and noble young man, who may depend upon my good will. Oh! that I had not given my word!—I like him so much, that had you been disposed, I could have willingly given him your hand."

"And cannot you be released from your word?" inquired Vaninka.

"Impossible!" said the General.

"Then must my destiny be accomplished!" said Vaninka.

"You speak like a dutiful child," observed her father, tenderly kissing her. "You have both acted well.—I require no more."

Having made a sign to Annouschka to return, he departed; and upon reaching the door of his room, found his serf Gregory.

"Well, your Excellence?" said the man.

"You were both right and wrong," replied the General. "Fœdor loves my daughter, and was in her apartment at eleven, but at midnight, he quitted her for ever. To-morrow, nevertheless, you shall have a thousand roubles, and your liberty."

Gregory was astonished.

During that time, Annouschka had returned to her mistress, and carefully closed the door. After listening to the departing steps of her father, Vaninka bounded out of bed, and rushing with her foster-sister towards the recess of the window, began uncovering an old-fashioned chest, of which Annouschka pressed a spring, and Vaninka hastened to raise the lid. A loud shriek burst from the lips of both. The chest had become a bier—containing only the lifeless body of the young officer!

For some time, the two women trusted that he had but fainted. Annouschka bathed his temples with water, while Vaninka applied her salts bottle to his nose; but all in vain! During Vaninka's prolonged conversation with her father, Fœdor, unable to release himself from the chest, had expired for want of air.

Their position was now dreadful; Annouschka thought only of Siberia; Vaninka, to do her justice, saw only the body of her

first and only love. Both were reduced to despair; but the attendant was more alive to the danger of their critical position, than her mistress; and imagined means by which they might extricate themselves from their perplexing situation.

"Mademoiselle," said she, "we are saved!"

Vaninka raised her eyes bathed in tears.

"What matters it what becomes of us!" cried she, "since he is lost to me for ever?"

"Deign, Mademoiselle, to listen to me. Your position is alarming—your misfortune great; but reflect that if the General knew all—"

"No matter!" replied Vaninka; "I will weep for him in the face of the whole world!"

"Ay, but you would weep dishonoured. To-morrow your slaves would know, and the next day, all St. Petersburg, that a dead body had been found in your room. Think, Ma-

demoiselle, of your reputation !—Think of that of your father—of your family !"

"You are right," said Vaninka, sorrowfully. "I must not soil the grey hairs of my father. What must we do ?"

"Mademoiselle knows my brother Ivan ?"

"Yes."

"We must tell him all."

"To a man—a slave too ?"

"Ay, and for that very reason ! The better for our secret—his reward depending entirely upon keeping it."

"He is a drunkard, too," observed Vaninka.

"It is true," said Annouschka ; "where is the serf who is not? But he is more sober than most of them, and in our position, we must not be too scrupulous."

"Too true !" replied Vaninka, summoning her usual self-command. "Go then, and seek your brother."

"We can do nothing this morning," said

Annouschka, opening the window-blinds. "See! it is broad day-light!"

"But where are we to place the body of my lost Fœdor?" exclaimed Vaninka.

"It must remain where it is. While you are at court, to-night, my brother shall take it away."

"Alas!" faltered Vaninka, "what will become of me? I cannot absent myself from court.—It would create suspicion.—Assist me, oh, Heaven!"

Annouschka now implored the aid of her lady, in replacing the corpse in the chest. Vaninka turned ghastly pale; but conscious of the danger, assisted to raise the body, while Annouschka, supporting the legs, lifted it gently into the chest. She then closed the lid, and locking it, put the key in her bosom. A bundle of linen, which had concealed it from the eyes of the General, was again replaced.

In spite of her anxious night, Vaninka was

punctual, as usual, at her father's breakfast table; unwilling to give him the least grounds for suspicion. From her deathly paleness, she seemed to have emerged from the tomb. The General attributed it to their nocturnal interview.

It was fortunate that Vaninka had announced Fœdor's departure; for not only the General did not seem surprised at his absence, which was an ample justification of his daughter; but pretended to have given him a mission. Vaninka avoided her room till the hour of dressing for that very court, to which, only a week before, she had been accompanied by the unfortunate Fœdor!

Vaninka need not have accompanied her father; but she feared, in the first place, giving him cause for anxiety who, probably, would have remained at home, and rendered the carrying away of the body more difficult; and, in the second, she would not meet the eyes of Ivan, and have to blush before a slave. She

resolved, therefore, to make a super-human effort; and retiring to her chamber, accompanied by her faithful Annouschka, dressed herself in the chamber of death, as magnificently as if her heart had been gay and joyful.

When attired for court, she ordered Annouschka to bolt the door. For she was resolved to see Fœdor for the last time, and bid a fond farewell to him she loved. Annouschka obeyed, and Vaninka, dazzling with jewels, but cold and pale as a statue, advanced like a phantom towards the chest.

Annouschka having opened it again, Vaninka, without shedding a tear, or heaving a sigh, but with the profound composure of despair, stooped towards Fœdor, took off a simple ring from his finger, and placing it betwixt two magnificent ones on her own, kissed him on the forehead saying—

"Farewell, my betrothed.—Fare thee well in this world!"—

Steps were now heard in the corridor—a

servant coming from the General to inquire if his daughter were ready.

Annouschka, therefore, quickly closed the chest; and Vaninka, opening the door herself, followed the messenger, leaving her faithful attendant and foster-sister, to accomplish the appalling task she had undertaken.

A moment afterwards, the carriage containing the General and his daughter, rolled out of the court. After waiting half an hour, Annouschka went down stairs in search of Ivan, and found him drinking with Gregory; to whom the General had made good his promise of the thousand roubles, and his liberty.

They were but at the onset of their merry making; so that Ivan was capable of comprehending the secret she had to confide to him; and followed Annouschka into her mistress's chamber, where she made known to him Vaninka's generous intentions towards him, for which the enjoyment of a few glasses of brandy had already predisposed him to be

grateful. Russians are essentially sentimental in their cups; and Ivan professed his devotion in such boundless terms, that Annouschka, no longer hesitating, opened the chest, and pointed to the body of Fœdor.

At this dreadful apparition, Ivan stood transfixed; but took courage quickly, perceiving the source of profit it must be to him to become possessor of so important a secret.—He swore, without hesitation, by all the saints in the Kalendar never to betray his young mistress; and, as Annouschka had anticipated, offered to rid them of their dreadful charge.

The thing was easy enough. Instead of returning to drink with Gregory and his companions, Ivan prepared a sledge loaded with straw, under which was concealed a crow-bar, and having stationed it ready at the door, unobserved by any one, he carried the body away, and laid it under the straw; then going out of the gate of the hotel, followed

the Nevski Perspective as far as the church of Znamenie, then the quarter of the Rejestwenskoi, driving his sledge to the middle of the Neva, opposite to the deserted church of the Holy Magdalen. There, in the dead of night, he with his crow-bar perforated the ice, and made a hole sufficiently large to thrust the body head foremost into the current, which would soon carry it to the gulph of Finland.

An hour afterwards, the wind having formed another coat of ice, there remained scarcely a trace of the operation !

At midnight, Vaninka and her father returned.

Heated by fever throughout the evening, she had never appeared more beautiful, or been the object of greater admiration.

Annouschka was waiting in the hall; to whom Vaninka, in handing her a cloak, hazarded an inquiring and anxious look.

" All is safe," said her foster-sister, in an under tone.

Vaninka breathed freely again, as if her bosom had been relieved of a mountain.

However great her self-possession, she could no longer support the presence of her father; but declaring herself fatigued, begged to be allowed to retire.

Upon reaching her room, she tore the flowers from her hair, the jewels from her bosom, and throwing herself upon the bed, gave vent to her painfully suppressed grief! Annouschka thanked God for this expansion of feeling; for her mistress's deliberate calmness drove her to despair!

Vaninka then fell on her knees and prayed; and afterwards, at the earnest supplication of her attendant, lay down to rest. Annouschka sat at the foot of the bed. Neither of them slept. But Vaninka found relief in unceasing tears.

Ivan, meanwhile, was not forgotten; but lest too considerable a sum of money should create suspicion in a slave, whenever he wanted

money, he was told to ask for it. Gregory, profiting by his liberty, established himself in a small public house, near the canal outside the town; where, thanks, to his numerous acquaintances, he carried on a thriving business, and the Red House, for such was the name and colour of the inn, enjoyed a brilliant reputation.

Another serf succeeded to his functions with the General; and with the exception of the absence of Fœdor, every thing went on as usual at Count Tchermayloff's.

Two months elapsed, without any one conceiving the least suspicion of what had occurred; when, one morning, previous to the hour of breakfast, the General sent for his daughter.

Vaninka trembled with fear; for since the fatal night, everything presented a cause for terror. Still, she summoned her courage, and proceeded promptly to her father's study. The Count was alone; but at the first glance, she

clearly saw there was no cause for alarm. The General received her with the kind expression, which, when with his daughter, formed the characteristic of his countenance. She therefore went up to him with her usual composure, and inclining, kissed him affectionately on the forehead.

Her father, bidding her be seated, handed her a letter already open; and Vaninka looked anxiously at the Count, then again at the letter, which contained news of the death of him to whom her hand was promised!—The young man had been killed in a duel!—

The General watched the effect of this account; and however great the self-command of Vaninka, such acute remorse overwhelmed her on learning she was free, that she could not suppress her emotion. The General perceived it, and attributed all to the attachment she had so long entertained for his young aide-de-camp.

"Come!" said he smiling, "I see all is for the best!"

"How so, dear father?"

"Why did not Fœdor leave us, on account of his attachment for you?"—

"Yes, father!" murmured Vaninka.

"Well then, he may now return!"

Vaninka stood mute and trembling.

"Return?"—faltered she, after a pause.

"I trust so," replied the General. "There is some one I think, in the house, who must know where he is. Find out, my child, and I will do the rest."

"Nobody knows where Fœdor is,—no one but God!" faltered Vaninka.

"Has he not been heard of since the day he disappeared?" inquired the General, hastily.

Vaninka made a negative sign of the head. Her heart was so convulsed that she could not articulate.

Her father looked dejected.

"Do you not fear some catastrophe?" inquired he of Vaninka.

"I fear that happiness is no longer possible for me in this world!" exclaimed Vaninka, sinking under the pressure of her despair. "Allow me to retire, dear father,—I am too wretched to say more!"—

The General, seeing in this exclamation, only the simple admission of her love, tenderly kissed his daughter, and allowing her to retire; still hoping, in spite of Vaninka's despair, that it would be possible to discover Fœdor.

That very day, he went to the Emperor, and related to him the ardent attachment of Fœdor for his daughter; imploring that, since death had freed him from his engagement, he might be allowed to dispose of his daughter's hand. The Emperor consented. The General next solicited another favour; and Paul being that day in a gracious mood, granted all. The General stated that, for two months past,

Fœdor had disappeared, and that they were all in complete ignorance as to where he was. He therefore entreated his Imperial Majesty to institute inquiries for his discovery; and the Emperor immediately ordered the minister of police to take the necessary steps.

Six weeks passed away without any result. Vaninka since the reading of the letter, had become much more dejected. In vain did the General try to inspire her with hope. Every word he uttered, served only to increase his child's despair. At length, he refrained from talking further to her of Fœdor.

Among the dependents of the family it was otherwise; for he was much beloved by them, and with the exception of Gregory, not one but wished him well. Since they found that he had not absented himself on the General's business, the subject was the constant topic of the establishment.

There was another place where his mysterious absence was the constant theme of dis-

cussion; and this was the sign of the Red House.

Since the day of his mysterious departure, the suspicions of Gregory had been increasing. He felt certain of having seen Fœdor enter the apartment of Vaninka; and unless he had gone forth during his interview with the General, he could not imagine how her father had not fallen in with Fœdor. Another thing that struck him as having some coincidence with the event, was the unusual prodigality of Ivan. But though a serf, he was the brother of the foster-sister of Vaninka; so that without being positive, Gregory suspected the origin of his wealth. A fact that tended to confirm his suspicions was, that Ivan who was become his best customer, never mentioned the name of Fœdor; and remained scrupulously silent whenever questioned on the subject. He generally evaded the conversation by saying, "Let us talk of something else!"

Under these circumstances, the feast of the

Epiphany arrived; an important festival at St. Petersburg, for on that day, takes place the Benediction of the waters. Vaninka was present at the ceremony; and being exhausted from fatigue, remained at home all the evening, so that Ivan the coachman, was able to repair to his favourite haunt, the Red House.

It was crowded; and Ivan's arrival was hailed with enthusiasm, his pockets being generally full. On this occasion, his comrades were not disappointed; for scarcely had he sat down, when he rang sorok kopecks on the table, to the great joy of his loose companions.

Gregory instantly appeared with a bottle in each hand; knowing that when Ivan treated, there was double profit, seeing that he both sold and drank his share. He was as usual pressed by Ivan to join their joyous party.

The subject of general conversation was their state of servitude; having in all, but four days in the year to rest from their eternal labour,

so that their envy of Gregory's freedom may be well imagined.

"No matter!" said Ivan upon whom the spirits began to produce their effect; "there are serfs still freer than their masters!"

"What mean you?" inquired Gregory pouring out more brandy.

"By free, I mean more happy!" replied Ivan eagerly.

"That is difficult to prove!" said Gregory with an air of doubt.

"Why so? No sooner do our masters come into the world, than they are confided to two or three pedants, a Frenchman, a German, and an Englishman. Whether the youth like it or not, he must remain in their society until he is seventeen; and learn their three brutal languages, in preference to our beautiful Russian. Next, he must be a soldier, where, if a lieutenant he is the slave of the one above him; when a captain the slave of the major; and so on to the Emperor, who is the slave of no one,

but, who some fine day is waylaid, strangled, or poisoned. In private life, it is different. The young lord marries a wife he barely knows, who engrosses all his time. If poor, he must find subsistence for his family; if rich, submit to be cheated by all who serve him. Is that the life of a freeman? Whereas when *we* come into the world, the only pain we give, concerns our mother; the next concerns our master, who must feed us, give us work, and when we are ill, cure us for nothing —for should we die, we are a dead loss to him! Then, we have four meals a day, and a comfortable stove to sleep on at night. Are we in love? Our marriage is never prevented, but encouraged by our master, in order that he may possess more serfs. I should like to know which are the happiest, the lords or the serfs?

"True enough!" murmured Gregory, helping him to more brandy; "but with all that, you are not free!"

"Free to do what?" inquired Ivan.

"To go where and when you will!"

"I?—as free as air!"

"Free as air, say you?"—

"Ay—I have a good master and a kind mistress," continued Ivan, "I have only to ask and—But enough!" said he with a wild smile, "I must go home sober to-night!"—

"That you may return and drink to-morrow!" said Gregory.

"I will come back to-morrow" said Ivan.

"You promise?" replied Gregory.

"The fact is, Ivan is the favourite of Mademoiselle Vaninka," said another serf of the General, who was present, and who had largely partaken of Ivan's generosity.

"Nevertheless!" observed Gregory, "the money will fail you some day or other!"

"Never!" exclaimed Ivan, swallowing another glass of brandy, "never as long as there is a kopeck in the purse of Mademoiselle!"

"I did not think her so generous!" said Gregory.

"You have a bad memory, my fine fellow! You have reason to know that she does not reckon with her friends—the knout to wit!"

"I alluded to her money, of which I have not yet seen the colour!"

"Well then! look at the colour of mine?" said Ivan becoming more and more inebriated. "Here are some of her kopecks for you!" said he, dashing them on the table, "blue notes, red notes, white if you like—worth fifty roubles—Here is to her health!"

Gregory now offered him another glass of brandy, which he quickly swallowed.

"But money, money!" observed Gregory, "Is it a compensation for contempt?"—

"*Who* despises me?" cried Ivan, "*you* because you are free?—pretty liberty indeed!—I prefer being a well-fed serf to a starving freeman!"

"I mean the contempt of one's masters,!" replied Gregory.

"The contempt of one's master? Ask Alexis,

or Daniel yonder whether Mademoiselle Vaninka despises me!"—

"The fact is," replied the two serfs, "Ivan must have some charm—for he is treated like a lord."

"Because he is the brother of Annouschka." said Gregory.

"Perhaps so!" said the two slaves.

"For that—or some other reason,—no matter!"

"But if your sister were to die?" persisted Gregory.

"Were my sister to die, she would be a loss, for she is a dutiful girl—here's to her health; but were she to die, it would make no difference as regards me! It is I they respect, and they respect me because they fear me.—Ha! ha! ha!"

"Mademoiselle Vaninka is afraid of my lord Ivan!—good!" cried Gregory. "Perhaps we shall some day hear of the Lord Ivan giving orders, instead of receiving them!"

"Perhaps you may," said Ivan.

"Hear him, my good friends, hear him!" cried Gregory.

"Ay, ay!—he was ever a boaster,"—said the other serfs, reduced to monosyllables.

"Instead of perhaps, then, I say for certain!"—cried the drunken boor.

"May I live to see the day!" cried Gregory.

"Send away yonder fellows, who are as drunk as pigs, and you shall see it when you please."

"Send them away?" said Gregory; "you are joking!—Not I!—I cannot afford to lose my customers."—

"How much can they drink of this abominable stuff before midnight, when you must close?" demanded Ivan.

"Twenty roubles worth, at least."

"Here are thirty. Send them away, that we may be alone."

"My friends," said Gregory, pulling out his watch, "it is near twelve. You know the regulations of the police. You must retire."

Like all Russians, accustomed to passive obedience, they withdrew without a murmur; so that Gregory, Ivan, and two other serfs alone remained.

"And now we are alone," said Gregory, "what will you do?"—

"What would you say if, in spite of the late hour and the cold, though we are but slaves, Mademoiselle Vaninka quitted her father's house to come and drink a cup to our healths?"

"That you had better tell her to bring a bottle of brandy with her; for no doubt, that in her father's cellar is better than mine."

"I will answer for that!" said Ivan, already well acquainted with it. "She shall bring more than one, depend upon it."

"You are mad, Ivan!" cried Gregory.

"He is mad certainly!" exclaimed the others.

"Am I forsooth?" replied Ivan. Will you make a bet?"—

"What will you risk?"—

"Two hundred roubles against as much liquor as I can drink during the next year."

"Done!" said Gregory.

"Are we of the party?" inquired the two Mougiks."

"To be sure," replied Ivan; "and for their sake, we will reduce the term to six months. Do you agree?"

"Agreed!" said Gregory.

And having shaken hands, the bargain was confirmed.

The self-assurance of Ivan confounded the witnesses of this singular scene; then throwing on his furred caftan, he departed. In half an hour, he returned.

"Well?" exclaimed Gregory, and the other two serfs.

"She is following me!" replied Ivan, coolly.

The three tipplers were mute with amazement. But Ivan resumed his place quietly among them, poured out another cup full, and raising his glass, cried out,

"To the health of our young mistress; it is

the least we can do for her condescension in visiting us this cold snowy night."

"Annouschka," said a female voice outside, "knock at the door, and ask Gregory if any of our people are within."

Gregory and the two slaves were petrified on recognizing the voice of Vaninka. As to Ivan, he lolled in his chair with boundless assurance.

Annouschka now opened the door, and as Ivan announced, they saw the snow falling in heavy flakes without.

"My brother, Madam, is here," said the attendant, "besides Daniel and Alexis."

Vaninka entered.

"My friends," said she, with an incoherent smile, "I heard you were drinking to my health, and am come to return you toast for toast. Here is some old brandy from France, out of my father's cellar. Hold forth your cups!"

Gregory and the two serfs obeyed in wonder, whilst Ivan advanced his cup with the most

perfect assurance. Vaninka filled each of the cups to the brim, and as they hesitated, exclaimed,

"Come, my good friends!—To my health!"

"Hurra, hurra!" cried the drunkards, set at ease by the easy familiarity of their young mistress, and having drunk off the spirit, Vaninka filled their cups once more, then placed the bottle upon the table. "Finish it, my friends," said she. "With Gregory's permission, Annouschka and I will stand near the stove until the storm is over."

Gregory attempted to rise, but completely intoxicated, sank down, vainly endeavouring to make an excuse.

"No matter; do not disturb yourselves, pray! Drink on, my friends," cried the young lady.

They obeyed; every man emptied the cup before him. Scarcely, however, had Gregory swallowed his, when he fell senseless from the table.

"It is well!" murmured Vaninka. "The opium does its work."

"But what is your intention?" inquired Annouschka.

"You shall see," replied Vaninka. "And oh! that it should have been brought to this!"—

The two Mougiks were not long in following the example of the master of the house, and fell down side by side. Ivan stood out the last, trying to keep off sleep by singing a drinking song. But his tongue soon refused its office, his eyes closed against his will, and while making his last efforts, he sank down by the side of his companions.

Immediately Vaninka rose, and looking at these men with eyes of fire, and calling to each successively without their answering, she clapped her hands, and with wild accents, exclaimed,

"The hour is come!"—

Proceeding to the extremity of the room,

she seized a bundle of straw, and distributed trusses in every corner of the room; then taking a flaring piece of wood from the stove, set fire to the four corners of the Red House.

"What are you doing?" inquired Annouschka, in consternation, trying to stop her.

"I am burying our secret!" replied Vaninka.

"But my brother—my poor brother!" exclaimed the unfortunate girl.

"Your brother is a villain, and has betrayed us. Either he or we must have been sacrificed!"—

"Oh! my poor brother!"

"You are free to die with him," said Vaninka, rejoiced to see the despair caused by her fraternal love.

"But we are surrounded, Mademoiselle, by the flames."

"Let us begone then," cried Mademoiselle Tchermayloff; and dragging away Annouschka

she closed and locked the door, flinging the key into the snow.

"In the name of Heaven, let us return home," said Annouschka. "I can no longer behold this dreadful spectacle."

"No, let us tarry here!" said Vaninka, grasping her foster-sister with superhuman force. "Let us witness the complete destruction of the house, and the oblivion of our secret."

"Almighty God!" exclaimed Annouschka, "have mercy on my brother!"

"Yes, yes—pray—pray fervently," cried Vaninka. "It is their bodies, not their souls, I would doom to perdition! Pray, for I dare not."

The conflagration was brief. The house being built of pine wood, as is usual in that country, the flames quickly shot up; and soon, nothing remained but a mass of burning embers.

Vaninka watched, with eager eye, the pro-

gress of destruction, trembling lest some spectre should rush from the flames. On seeing the roof fall in, free from further fear, the guilty woman returned to the house of her father; which, thanks to the precaution of Annouschka, they entered unperceived.

The next day, the burning of the Red House formed the topic of conversation in St. Petersburg. The four bodies of the serfs, half consumed, were extricated from the ruins; and as the three which belonged to the General were missing, it was not doubtful that they were those of Daniel, Ivan, and Alexis. As to the fourth, it was soon recognised as that of Gregory.

The cause of the fire remained a mystery to all. The house was isolated, and the snow so violent, that women could not be supposed to be out. Vaninka was sure of her foster-sister. Her secret, therefore, died with Ivan. Fear now gave way to remorse. The girl, so inflexible in her projects of vengeance, sank

beneath the remembrance of it. She imagined that by disburthening her bosom of her crime to a priest, she might relieve herself from this insupportable penance; and, therefore, sought out a Papa known for his great benevolence, and confessed to him all that had happened.

The priest was confounded by the recital! Divine mercy is boundless, but that of man finite. The priest refused his absolution to Vaninka! This terrible decree excluded Vaninka from the Holy table, a circumstance which could be only attributed to some unusual fault or crime.

Vaninka fell at the feet of the priest; and in the name of her father, who would be dishonoured by her shame, supplicated him to be more merciful in his judgment.

The priest reflected, and thought he had found means of conciliating all, by decreeing that she should approach the holy table with the other young maidens; but that, in approaching her, instead of offering to her the

holy sacrament, he would merely say, "pray and weep," while the bystanders would be deceived by appearance.

This was the only concession Vaninka could obtain.

The confession took place about seven in the evening; when the obscurity of the church and the utter solitude, made it more impressive. The priest returned pale and trembling home; where his wife was anxiously expecting him.

On perceiving her husband, she shuddered to see him so wan and care-worn; when he tried to calm her anxiety. But in so doing, he increased her fears, and she tried in vain to discover the cause of this emotion. Having heard that her mother was ill, she imagined, (as it was Monday an ill-omened day with Russians,) that there must be some fatal news, and burst into tears, exclaiming, "My mother is dead!"

Vainly did her husband strive to convince her that such was not the cause of his agitation;

but his poor wife absorbed by one idea, reiterated, "Alas! my poor mother is dead."

To undeceive her, the Papa at length admitted that his emotion proceeded from a confession he had just heard. Still, his wife fancied it an artifice to conceal the misery awaiting her; and her agitation becoming more and more intense, her husband could no longer keep the secret, but betrayed the sacred secret of the confessional.

The day of the sacrament arrived, and the church of St. Simeon was crowded by the faithful. Vaninka knelt at the balustrade before the sacred table; while behind her, stood the General and his aides-de-camps, and further on, their household attendants.

Unfortunately, the wife of the priest, a feeble and superstitious woman, was full of curiosity to behold the heroine of this terrible adventure. Armed with conscious superiority over the guilty Vaninka, she kept pressing forward so inquisitively to witness the scene

betwixt her husband and his penitent at the solemn moment, that at length, one of the domestics of the General unceremoniously repelled her nearer approach. Being a woman of mean appearance, and holding a child by the hand, little ceremony was used towards her by the privileged attendants of the haughty Mademoiselle Tchermayloff.

The wife of the Papa, irritated at being thrust rudely aside, and still more so by a cry uttered by her child, who was trampled in the throng, at length, indulged in exclamations of scorn regarding the guilty Vaninka in whose behalf she was thus treated, which reached the ears of Mademoiselle Tchermayloff even as she stood at the foot of the altar!

In another moment, she lay senseless on the ground!

* * * * *

The following decree of the Emperor Paul, which is copied literally from the work of Monsieur Dupré St. Marie, who was resident

in Russia, at the epoch of this dreadful discovery, contains such glimmerings of reason and justice as might have been expected from a man of his peculiar intellect.

Immediately on receiving from his unfortunate daughter an avowal of her crime, General Tchermayloff threw himself at the feet of his Imperial master, to make a full admission of the truth. Before he quitted the presence of Paul, the Emperor decided as follows:

1.—The Papa having violated the secrets of the confessional, is stripped of his gown, and banished with his wife to Siberia.

2.—Annouschka is banished to Siberia, for not having apprized the General of the conduct of his daughter.

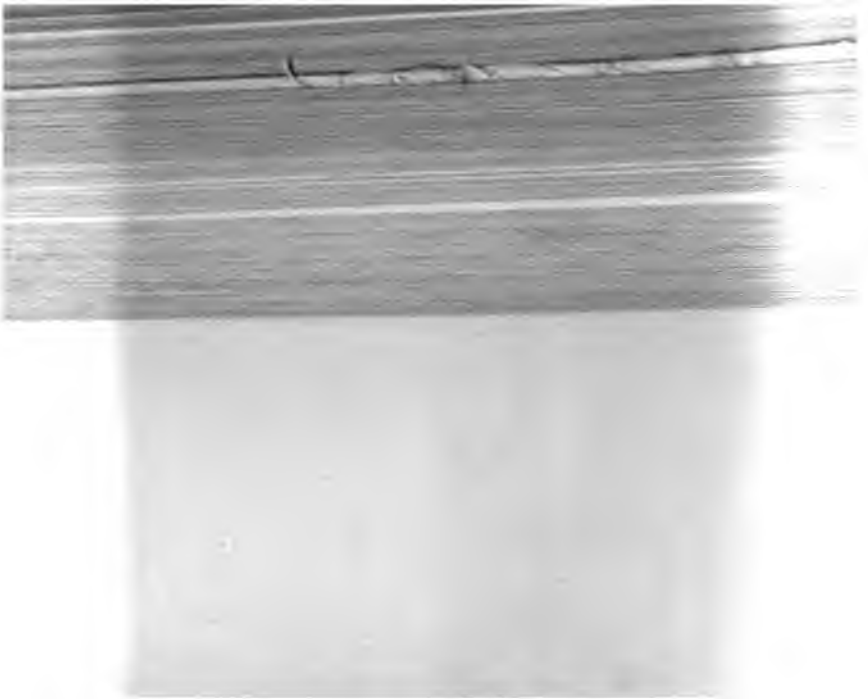
3.—Vaninka Tchermayloff, as the daughter of a brave man who has devoted his whole life to his country, is permitted to enter a convent of the strictest rules that exist in Russia,—where her guilty conscience will inflict the severest punishment."

So severe indeed was the punishment it inflicted, that, within six months, the broken hearted criminal was laid in the grave.

Her father survived long enough to be killed at the battle of Austerlitz.

The site of the Red House is still shown to foreign visitors at St. Petersburg, as illustrative of the strange destinies and lawless dispositions of the beautiful Vaninka.

DEFAMATION.



DEFAMATION.

CHAPTER I.

In the time of Maximilian XXIV, the chateau of Offenbach, was a gay and brilliant residence. The Prince of Isenbourg, on succeeding to the title and possessions of his father, had made a precipitate marriage; and after remaining attached to his wife for about six months, appropriated to her use a residence about two miles from his palace. Since that demi-divorce, (which he did not always respect, making occasional visits to the castle of the beautiful Landgravine,) Maximilian led a gay life with his young and brilliant companions; to the great scandal of the good

burghers of Offenbach. But their strictures upon the Prince's proceedings never went beyond their usual domestic circle; and had the public voice been canvassed, there would have been the most unanimous approbation of the noble character and exceeding moral worth of the Landgrave of Isenbourg.

The harshest criticism they ever adventured, was to desire for their sons a tenderer conscience than the Prince of Isenbourg, and for their daughters a happier destiny than that of Clementine, the forsaken Landgravine.

One night, a word from the royal lips of Maximilian brightened the gloomy faces of the young noblemen of his court. They were about to retire to rest after a hard day's hunt, and above all, without their usual cards, in the green drawing-room, where the Prince was in the habit of dispensing with the etiquette observed in the state apartments; when the Landgrave observed,

"I am about to visit the Princess Clementine—and alone."

In another moment, he was on horseback, in the court of the castle; when his eyes met those of Rodolph de Hatzfeld, his favourite companion among his young friends. The

Prince looked at him with a smile, which was not returned. Maximilian had deprived him of an evening's pleasure.

"I am thinking, gentlemen," said the Landgrave, "that we might as well all sup together. What say ye?"

"With all my soul, Prince," cried Rodolph. "It is the first cheering word we have heard to-day. No more of the Landgravine."

"Come then, and hold my horse's head while I dismount," cried the Prince; "and you, Baron, give instructions for supper."

The allusions of the Count of Hatzfeld to his wife, had wounded the heart of Maximilian by reminding him of the wrongs of the Princess; but no sooner had they assembled in the green chamber, than the joys of the table subdued his remorse. The mirth of his guests, and the happy freedom of the conversation, restored the Prince to his usual good humour. He was the first to laugh at his idea of his visit to the Landgravine; of whom, for six months past, he had scarcely thought a moment.

The guests sat down round a large table; and then only did they perceive the absence of one of the accustomed guests of these impromptu feasts. There stood his empty seat.

"Otto is absent," cried the Prince. "But we must positively have him. Let some one go seek him. If he be not at home, let them search the town till they find him."

"Ay, ay, bring him bound hand and foot, if necessary. We cannot do without him," cried all the rest.

Ten servants immediately went in search of the truant. Otto was about the same age as the Landgrave; and both chief counsellor of the throne, and constant sharer of the Prince's pleasures. During the noisiest orgie, however, a cloud was often seen upon his face, while he contemplated with a sneer the joyous excitement of Maximilian's young companions. But this gravity, defying the lively sallies of his friends, diverted the Landgrave; and never did he feel more amused, than when the gloomy constrained look of his favourite minister opposed its influence to their exhilaration and joy.

The presence of Otto was indispensable to the suppers of the Prince. Without the young minister, no shade to the picture, no emotion for the Landgrave. And then what a triumph for Maximilian, when he succeeded in deceiving the sobriety of his friend, by changing his decanter of water for some bright and limpid

wine! It did not do to exceed a certain limit; Otto having declared that he only frequented these suppers from respect to the Prince's authority; and that, from the day on which they should dare to compromise the dignity of his character, they might cease to number him among the guests of the green chamber.

In spite of this declaration, the change of the decanters was often resorted to; and still, Otto appeared at the suppers. He was often indeed the first to provoke such meetings; and at court, it was whispered that "the bear was civilizing, and Cato becoming Epicurus." The bear did not, however, humanise his countenance, which was as gloomy as ever, and his looks as forbidding.

The messengers sent in search of the minister, did not find him at home. At first, his secretary assured them that his lord was engaged; but upon being pressed, he was obliged to confess the truth.

"So then," said Maximilian, "my suspicions are confirmed. My sage minister is got entangled in the meshes of one of the fair ladies of my court. He would not betray the secret; but we must have it out of him."

Maximilian then made a list of the ladies he thought capable of such a triumph.

"Let us divide the list," said Rodolph of Hatzfeld; "and each of us make known to one of those ladies, that his highness is waiting for the advice of Otto for a most important state affair."

"Done!" they all exclaimed. "Otto has proved his want of confidence in us. Let us turn the tables on him."

The investigation, divided among so many emissaries, could not delay the supper more than an hour; and the sequel seemed to promise so much diversion to the Prince, that he readily agreed to their project.

At the close of an hour, the dissolute friends of Maximilian returned to the castle, with a rich store of amusing anecdotes to enliven the Prince's supper, concerning their search; but Otto remained undiscovered. Vainly had Rodolph invaded the privacy of the boudoir of the pretty Baroness of Rœdelheim, and scarcely escaped the sword of her angry spouse, furious in being detected in a conjugal game of piquet with his wife. Rodolph had the greatest difficulty in persuading the old

Baron that, having met no one to question, he had ventured this intrusion in search of the minister, who might possibly have been admitted to their domestic circle. The Baron bowed him out, with indignation.

While the Prince's friends were searching the Residence far and near, injuring the reputation of several noble ladies, and raising anxious conjectures in the minds of their husbands, provoking the indignation of the prudes, and probably their jealousy of the mysterious object of the minister's idolatry, his secretary, a faithful and discreet servant, mounted his horse and quickly set out for the Château of the Princess Clementine: delivered a sealed paper to one of the women of the Landgravine, and immediately returned on foot toward Offenbach.

The devoted servant of the minister had not proceeded far, when the gallop of a horse pursuing the same road as himself, was heard at a distance; and in a few moments, he recognised his master, whom he followed; directing him in a low voice, though the night was obscure, and the road deserted.

"This way Sir," said he, "to the left—to the right—through the bushes—across the brook

—take the ditch—Good!—never fear, they shall take my life rather than your secret. See, Sir! the lights of the city! We shall be at home before they have a suspicion."

Otto's secretary continued to run by his side; but upon arriving at the entrance of a wood, he held the horse by the head with one hand, while with the other he pushed away the branches. No obstacle could impede his progress. He conducted his master's horse through brooks and rugged paths, stumbling every moment. At length, looking back in the distance from which he came, Otto ventured to murmur,

"What a misfortune! It may cost her her life! What must I say? what lie shall I invent?

At length, they reached the gates of the town; when Otto dismounted, not having time even to thank his faithful secretary; grasping his hand without pronouncing a word of acknowledgment. But in the safety of his master, this devoted servant had already found sufficient compensation.

Wrapped in his cloak, Otto pursued his way through the streets, ruminating a thousand projects for his excuses to the Prince. On

approaching the palace, it was the hour when the laborious mechanics of Offenbach lay down their tools, doff their aprons, and rest themselves after fifteen hours' work. The minister beheld the successive extinguishing of the furnaces, and the lighting of the iron lamps. The thumps of the heavy hammers had ceased. Mothers beckoned their sportive offspring within, and closed the doors. Still, the minister, undecided in his plan, sought a plausible pretext for his absence.

Only a short and narrow street intervened between him and the palace; when, raising his eyes towards Heaven, as if to seek a happy inspiration, he perceived at the window in the third story of a mean-looking house, a flickering light shining through the white curtains of a garret window. Before this dwelling, sat a boy of seven or eight years of age, upon a stone. Otto still hesitating, looked again at the only light appearing the full length of the street; and advanced towards the sleeping boy, who started up.

"What are you doing here, my poor little fellow?" said he, tapping him gently on the shoulder. The child rubbed his eyes, and replied, "I was sleeping, Sir, while waiting

for my mother, who is gone to fetch my father's supper. If you want her, she will be here directly."

"Can you tell me," inquired Otto "pointing to the lighted window, "who inhabits that room?"

"Oh, yes! It is Helena, the embroideress, who is waiting for her brother Hugo, and her intended, Anselm Werner. A pretty girl, I promise you! and I am invited to the wedding."

"The occasion is favourable," muttered Otto, struck with a sudden idea. "A young girl alone—this child for a witness. I have no alternative." Then, raising his voice, "Do you think, you young varlet, that I am not a match for you?" said he. "You were pretending to sleep, the better to watch me."

"I, Sir? Why, I am yawning now," cried the child. "I assure you I was dead asleep."

"That won't do; and mind, if you ever dare say you saw me come out of that house."—The child looked bewildered. "You saw me, I know!" said Otto. "But here is something to keep your tongue quiet."

Otto now took some florins out of his pocket. The child eyed the money without daring to touch it, though he had the strongest desire.

A noise of footsteps was heard, and the little fellow looked round.

"There is my mother," said he.

Upon which, the minister slipped the florins into his hand, repeating—

"Above all, beware how you own that you saw me come out of Helena's lodgings."

Otto now pursued his way to the palace. Rodolph de Hatzfeld, and some other young courtiers, arrived at the same time, humiliated by their ill-success.

Rodolph, afar off, recognising the minister, ran towards him, crying out to his friends,

"We have him—he shall not escape us !"

Otto now found himself surrounded by the Prince's companions. Overwhelmed by questions—smarting under their mockery—assailed on all sides, he replied—

"You shall know from whence I come, only in the presence of his highness."

"Right!" cried Rodolph. "Let us all go to his highness!"

The young men preceded Otto to the green

chamber, in which
were heard long bef
"Well!" said th
which of our great
palm? What luck
in taming our savag
These words, u
like a crushing w
Otto; and he sh
Fortunately, his a
His presence of mi
to answer with assu
merry guests.
"To own the t
"our researches
not in any house
hope to find him.
those of the great la
"Perhaps," said
"you might have be
looked somewhat lo
"Higher, or lowe
Rodolph.
Otto was silent.
The Landgrave l
Count of Hatzfeld.
"Spare, I beg of

we respect. There are none superior to the ladies alluded to, but her Serene Highness my mother—"

Rodolph suppressed his inclination to laugh.

Maximilian continued,

"The Princess Jane, and the Landgravine, my wife."

This reprimand to the incautious Count Rodolph, pleased the minister. They now sat down. After the first course, the Landgrave made a sign to the servants, who retired. The conversation was then resumed, the young minister having nothing more to fear.

"So!" exclaimed Maximilian. "It is not possible then to discover the mysterious object, of our friend's passion?"

"No, Prince; but Otto has promised to conceal nothing—so that your highness has only to interrogate him."

"Let me beg of you to dispense with my confession," interrupted the other.

"And why?" cried the Landgrave. "Is not my court, a court of gallantry? You know, Otto, that among us there are no secrets. We all agree in revealing everything—if it be only for the sake of avoiding rivalship.

"We can never be rivals. I know that you do not love her who has captivated me."

"Explain yourself more clearly; a truce to reserve! You promised to divulge all.—You must keep your word."

"Is your Highness so much interested in the matter? Believe me that were I attached to any one of the ladies who try the influence of their charms upon our circle, I would instantly name her, that the others might not be suspected."

"The one you admire, then, does not come to the palace? Good!—we have learnt something. Proceed!"

"No! it is useless to press me—I will not divulge my secret."

"Then she must be disgracefully ugly!" observed Rodolph. "I guessed as much!"

"Ay, frightful!" exclaimed all the others, enumerating the different degrees of ugliness, and all the deformities of nature with which they could endow the idol of their friend.

"You are now bound to make her known to us, or be deemed a disloyal felon," cried the Prince.

"This is really a persecution!" exclaimed Otto, delighted in his heart with the turn the conversation had taken. "How do ye know

that it is not more important for me than for her, to preserve the secret of this affair? I confess to you, that the object of my boundless passion does not pretend to a single quartering of nobility. She is a poor workwoman!—Yes, gentlemen, while you were hunting up countesses and baronesses, I was whiling away an hour with a young embroideress. But remember it is in pure confidence I tell you this."—

"And where does this divinity live?" urged Rodolph.

"That I must decline answering.—Let us talk of something else."

"No, no!" said the Prince. "Her address we must have, or I shall not believe a word of the story."

"You would take advantage of it, gentlemen. She is soon to be married, so do not molest her."

"Otto, do you believe my word?" said Maximilian. "Tell us the name of this pretty embroideress, and in that of all my friends, I swear to hold you quits!"

"But for what purpose?"

"That on the day of her marriage, we may

proceed to church, and
your taste."

"Yes, gentlemen, we
due decorum. Let us r
this poor girl," cried Rod

"Ay, ay!" cried the
much after having enjo
Otto, to be obliged to es
But her name, I entre
it!"

The young minister p
reproaching him heavily
which chance alone had
had determined upon si
look of the Prince ch
When again urged, he r
Helena, and she lives
White Eagle!"

"I should have though
for cut-throats than pret
the Landgrave, laughing;
the happiness of the futu

CHAPTER II.

THE boy in the street of the White Eagle having turned over the florins in his hand, and examined, by the brightness of the moon, the noble effigy they bore, asked himself how it were possible to spend so much money at the approaching fair of Offenbach,—where the best Nuremburg Saints cost only two kreuzers a piece!

When his mother approached, he knew not how to hide his wealth; for he had neither pockets nor stockings, nor were his wooden shoes secure.

"Go in, Fritz!" said the poor woman; "here is your father coming, and his supper not ready. He will scold;—here, take this bottle and porringer."

Poor Fritz dared not lay hold of the porringer, for fear of exposing the money.

"Take it, I say."

"I can't, mother, my hands are already full."

Fritz took off his woollen cap, and placed his treasure carefully within; but on covering his head, he perceived a gold piece lying on the ground.

"Holy Virgin! it rains gold!" cried his mother; "move further, that I may seek by the light of the lamp."

So abruptly did she push the child to examine the piece sparkling upon the ground, that the blow shook the pieces one by one from the woollen cap.—The sum was ten florins!

"A miracle, miracle,!" cried the good woman. "Here is my son melting into gold!"

At this exclamation, two doors suddenly opened.

"Who calls?" cried some one above stairs.

"Come down—come down—here is little Fritz melting into florins," replied the astonished woman.

They did not want to be asked twice; but came down with their wooden candlesticks, and stood astounded at the riches lying at the feet of the child. Interrupted by the cries of his mother every time he was about to speak, Fritz did not know how to explain that this money did not proceed from the devil; but

was given to him by a fine gentleman to silence him upon the subject of Helena.

When one of the women attempted to obtain a closer view of the infernal coin, Fritz's mother withheld her, saying, "Touch it not! your fingers will be burnt!"—The child instantly picked it up.

"You see it does not burn, mother!" said he. "I felt nothing hot when the fine gentleman placed it in my hand!"

"What gentleman? Tell us, Fritz! Speak."

Having picked up all the florins, which his mother tied up carefully in a pocket handkerchief, the child seated himself upon the stone steps and began to narrate how a gentleman wrapt in a cloak had come out of Helena's house, and found him sleeping upon the steps; and how he gave him a handful of money in order that he might not mention that he saw him come out of Helena's house. Not a word did he say of the gentleman waking him up for the purpose of bribing him to silence. The neighbours, the women at least, listened with joy and amazement, opening their eyes and mouths; and Fritz, encouraged by the interest displayed by these good women in his recital, added,

'I [illegible]bour Helena say

adieu, though I am not quite sure. But it must have been something very important to make that gentleman give me so much money."

"Then you really saw him come out of Helena's house?" again inquired his mother.

"Why, did he not pay me for not seeing him?"

"It was some great lord, be sure of that. Work people like my father do not wear velvet mantles."

"The boy is right. It was some one belonging to the court," said they. "Only think of Helena!—What wickedness!—Who could have suspected her?"—

"I have long had a bad opinion of the girl," said one. "On the point of being married too!—how shameful!"

"Ah, if her poor mother were alive," cried another, "she would cry tears of blood."—

"And her father—he would have killed her. He was such a worthy man."—

"Shall we allow Anselm to make such a marriage as that?—He is my cousin, and shall not disgrace the name of our family."—

"But who can this lord be? Never does Helena go out without her brother or her intended."

"She need not trouble herself to go out, since he comes, when he likes, to see her."

"He is only like all young men. It is for the girls to take care of themselves," added another.

This gossiping would have lasted much longer, if the father of Fritz had not returned.

"What is the matter, neighbours?" inquired George. "No accident I hope?"—

"Only that our boy has made us richer by ten florins," said his wife.

"Ten florins?" exclaimed George. "How came he by so much money?"

Fritz would have been enchanted to relate the story of the nobleman in the velvet mantle over again; but his father cut him short.

"I say, wife, is not my supper getting cold?" said he. "I am hungry. Fritz shall tell me all about it while I am eating my supper; and if he have no right to the florins, I will find a means of returning them to-morrow to their owner."

"Return them?"—exclaimed the child, stepping up stairs with the porringer of supper. "Mother has already got hold of them. They are safe enough now."

While in the green chamber of the Landgrave they were pledging to the health of the minister in love with the girl of low degree, in the family of George the cooper, they were breathing curses upon the work-girl seduced by the great lord!—Meanwhile, poor Helena, on the watch for footsteps on the stairs, sat quietly at her embroidery frame.

"Ah, so much the better! It is not him," murmured she, over her work. "But to-morrow is Sunday, and he will be with me the whole day. And next week, no work!—no, none!—We shall be married on Monday; and I must keep him at home at least eight days."

Resuming her needle more cheerfully, her hand flew over her work, intermingling the capital letter H with the initials of her future bridegroom. Helena was embroidering the nuptial cravat of the fortunate Anselm.

On the eve of the important day, she did not feel the melancholy depression common to the hearts of maidens about to wed. She knew too well the excellent temper and frank sincerity of Anselm, for any idea of fear to trouble her dreams of bliss. For five years, Helena had kept house for her brother and future husband. Nothing would be changed

in the happy existence of the beautiful embroideress. She eagerly wished for the wedding day, because they promised she should dance to her heart's content, and she adored dancing. Besides, she was to have a week's holiday; after which, it was agreed that they should all return to their usual routine in the street of the White Eagle.

They were still to live together; only Anselm would quit the little dark room where he had slept so long, and his brother-in-law would go and occupy his place. It was not from any jealous disquietude that she listened for their steps. She expected them home from work as usual. That day, they were to return home late; but so far from being uneasy, Helena feared lest they should return home before she should have completed the embroidered neckerchief.

She had long been employed clandestinely on this work; and it was with reluctance she concealed anything from Anselm, even for the sake of an agreeable surprise. The clock of the chateau was striking eleven, just as Helena was terminating the cravat. At eleven, Hugh and his future brother-in-law entered the

street, singing; when Helena instantly detected their voices.

"Sing,—sing!"—said the good-natured neighbours, who were still harping upon the mysterious visits of the velvet mantle; "your song will soon be ended."

Helena in her garret also said,

"Sing,—sing!—dear Anselm; you will be more delighted still, when I shew you the beautiful cravat I have worked for you."

The two friends arrived in their garret. The table was laid out with supper, and the cravat wrapt up in white paper, placed upon the plate of her future husband.

"You have had a good day's work, and I too!" said she.—"Anselm, open that paper, and see the surprise I have in store for you!"

Anselm hastened to unfold the paper, while the young girl blushed with joy at seeing him admire the cravat. In the excess of his joy, he rose to embrace Helena.

"Have I your leave, brother?"—said he to Hugh.

"Ay, kiss her," replied he, recharging his pipe. "The labourer is worthy of his hire, and her embroidery deserves a kiss."

Helena presented her cheek, upon which her youthful admirer imprinted a loving salute. They were about to retire; and Helena was merry enough, till the moment when Hugh, shaking the ashes of his pipe, seriously addressed her.

"Listen, children!" said he. "When my good father—God bless his memory—left this world, he said to me, 'I leave you a heavy charge—the care of providing for a young girl, and the protection of her reputation.' Those words did not fall into the ears of a man unmindful of his promises. I swore to become the protector of Helena—to be to her as a father—and am proud to confess that the charge has been but light, thanks to the exemplary conduct of my sister."

Helena listened attentively, while Anselm sat notching the oak table with his knife. Helena now interrupted her brother.

"Why pay me these compliments?" said she. "You have made good your promise to your father, and I, what was due to myself, —to you, and Anselm; so that we have all done our duty, and nothing more."

"No, sister, I have not finished. My father said to me, 'the wife must contribute to the

support of the family; the husband must render the children worthy the tenderness of their mother. You know it, Hugh.' Listen well, dear sister, it is our dying father speaks!—'You are aware, my son, that I possess talents and experience; not those requiring strength of arm, but the knowledge and eloquence indispensable to a lawyer. In defending the fortunes of others against the unworthy designs of bad faith, I neglected my own, and forgot that one must sometimes, with regard to our future interests, do violence to our probity and support the unfounded claims of a rich and powerful client, at the risk of sacrificing the dignity of the gown. The lawyer requires patrons; and the world is apt to say, 'It is only lost causes that bring disgrace; or causes gained, that confer honour.' Your grand-father thought otherwise. I wished to preserve, in more adverse times than his, the same severity of principles. I was avoided. I had the reputation of gaining causes not worthy consideration. They seemed ignorant that, in my successes, it was often against a powerful opponent I influenced the judges of my tribunal.—God pardon them!—Six times consecutively was the name of my adverse party

of greater weight in the balance than the just cause which I defended. Contemned by the rich, who triumphed over my eloquence, an object of hatred to those whose ruin I had unwillingly hastened, despised by my colleagues, I began to discover that an honest man was more in his place in the workshop, than at the bar of a tribunal, when he clings to the esteem of his fellow creatures. I then said, My son shall work for his bread; threw away the lawyer's gown, and adopted the workman's apron. Your worthy mother survived but a short time this tardy resolution. I brought you up—had your sister taught a calling; and now, end my days in despair, for in spite of my efforts, I cannot give her a fortune worthy the honest man she has chosen for her husband. I repeat to you, my son, a girl ought to have a dowry.'"

Once more did poor Hugh pause and charge his pipe; his usual custom when trying to suppress a strong emotion, and never did he speak of his father without being profoundly agitated. Helena's tears now trickled down her cheeks. As to Anselm, he still held his knife, but no longer notched the table; the discourse of his friend having absorbed all his

attention. When his brother-in-law had ceased speaking, he took him energetically by the hand.

"Brother," said he, "for so I must now call you—speak no more of marriage portions! Are we not agreed that every Saturday evening, we will contribute the earnings of the week towards the support of the house?—When we shall have laid by sufficient savings, we will open a blacksmith's shop under the firm of Anselm, Werner, and Co."

"Good!" said the brother of Helena. "We will open it then next week, if you will."

"But it is not possible!" said she. "I know the means of Anselm. They are not great; and when I have bought my wedding dress, I shall have little left."

"So it may be with you," continued Hugh. "But you forget *me*. Do you think I would have allowed my sister to marry, if I had not been able to keep the vow I made my father? Helena *shall* have a marriage portion! When I heard him lament his inability to give you one, I swore it, to make his death happier than his life; and as the promises of Hugh Werner are not made to the winds, I have earned

a fortune for my sister. Thank God, neither my will nor my arms have failed me! Look, my children," added he, producing a leather sack. "Count the dollars and rix-dollars, and tell me if they are not better than the surprise of an embroidered cravat?"

The young girl was amazed on seeing the riches displayed by her brother; and clang to the neck of Hugh, who smilingly tried to avoid her caresses.

"You are satisfied!—that's all I want," said he. "Our father must be so, too, if he sees from above that I have fulfilled the double duty he imposed upon me.——It is for you, Anselm, to watch henceforward over her welfare and reputation."

"Hugh," replied Anselm, "you do too much for us. I did not require a fortune with Helena."

"It can do you no harm: and now, suppose we smoke a pipe?"

"It is almost one o'clock," replied Helena; "you are fatigued; let us go to bed!"—

"Good night," said her brother; and a quarter of an hour afterwards, there was no light to be seen through the curtains of the garret window.

The next day was Sunday;—a superb Sunday, with the fine grey sky of Germany, a clouded sun, and the heavy and tepid atmosphere of the last days of summer; a Sunday, such as the men wish for, who pass it in drinking and playing at bowls at the inn; and such as the maidens pray for, that they may saunter under the fine trees of the public walk.

Already were the husbands counting the money to be devoted to the day's pleasure. The little boys were running about the streets, and the maidens preparing for morning church. As to the women, they loitered in groups about the doors, gossipping in every direction. But it was chiefly in the street of the White Eagle that their groups were most numerous and animated; Madame George, the mother of Fritz, relating the story of the ten florins over and over again. She was eagerly listened to; and to every new comer; repeated the conversation of the lord in the velvet mantle with her son, adding some embellishment at every repetition.

The passers-by picked up matter to gratify the curiosity of their neighbours, and circulated the wonderful story of the cooper's wife; and both the amount of the treasure, and of the scandal, augmented as the distance was lengthened from the street in which Helena resided.

"It is not the first time that the lord has been found out, in this neighbourhood, too!" said one. "And, mark my words, this is not the first affair of Helena," said another. "She is as arrant a flirt as lives in the good town of Offenbach."

Not only did they condemn the beautiful embroideress, but there were some among the groups who loudly censured the weakness of the intended bridegroom, and the indifference of the brother to the fair fame of his sister.

As church-time approached, the mothers desired their daughters to avoid all communication with Helena. Not even a sign or gesture was to pass between them. They were to avoid being seen on the same side of the street. The husbands advised their wives to the same effect; and the young men agreed to avoid sitting on the same bench with either the brother or the future bridegroom. With these charitable feelings, they all proceeded to church.

Anselm, Hugh and his sister saw several groups abruptly avoid them upon going into church. The two workmen held forth their hands, but for the first time they received no friendly greeting in return. Anselm frowned, while Hughes observed, in a low voice:—"Be

composed. We are in the temple of God. On going out, we will know what all this means."

Helena likewise found her friendly smile unnoticed; while the forbidding looks of the men and women made her cast down her eyes, though she could not understand the motive of their conduct.

The priest rose in the pulpit, and took for his text, "Touch not pitch, that ye be not defiled!"

Upon hearing these words, those who were near the beautiful Helena retired, so that she remained alone in the centre of a circle!

"Let us go," said her brother; "it is not here this mystery can be explained."

Without ending this menace, he hurried out his sister and her betrothed; all eyes were directed towards her, and she met only the expression of contempt.

Helena sank down at the door of the church, pale and trembling, while Anselm paced to and fro, his arms folded. As to Hugh, he went from one to the other perfectly bewildered and amazed.

The sermon lasted two hours—a dreadful state of suspense for the young family! At last, several maidens came out, whom Helena

addressed by name; but instead of replying, they ran away. Hugh ran after them, and caught one by the arm.

"Let me go, Hugh," said she; "my mother has ordered me to avoid your sister."

The brother of Helena was again about to question her, when he saw his future brother-in-law talking with energy to several young men. Leaving the young girl, he forthwith joined the group formed around his brother. As he arrived, he heard—"Yes, Helena deceives you and your brother, and receives her lover every evening!"

"A lover!" repeated Hugh, in a rage. "Who dares to say so?"

"I, and I!" exclaimed several voices of men and women.

"Witnesses—witnesses!" cried Hugh.

"As many as you will," repeated the neighbours; while Helena, transfixed by such an accusation, could not utter a word of justification. Sobbing, and clasping her hands in despair, she tried to speak; but her voice lost in tears, was quite unintelligible.

His eyes flashing in rage, his face red with indignation, her brother called out to her three several times—

"Answer, thou wretched girl!" said he. "Is this true?"

But she could not articulate a word. Anselm, who till then had vehemently supported his brother-in-law, remained dumb when he heard the accusers of Helena offer to bring proofs of his bride's misconduct. Suspicion attained his heart!—Still, Helena did not answer!

Hugh, still uncertain, held his sister's hand, saying—

"Speak—but speak, then—you *cannot* be guilty! Helena! your brother prays you to confound your accusers."

Seeing her still suffocated by her grief, he added—

"Tears are no answer! I implore you again—have they spoken falsely?—Say that you are pure—that you are yet my sister, Helena? See! Anselm suffers as I do!"

"He doubts me then?" exclaimed the beautiful girl; recovering her utterance, "Then I am too unfortunate, dear brother! for I swear to you I am pure and without reproach."

This avowal relieved the heart of the young workman from cruel torture. He breathed freely again; and, turning to those around him, said, "I knew she was innocent!"

"What proof has she brought?"—murmured those around him, with a suppressed laugh.

Anselm bit his lips, but Hugh took the arm of his sister.

"You say there are witnesses. This day must I see them; and woe be to him who bears false witness against my sister."

With hasty steps Hugh left the place, leading Helena, who dared not look behind her. But as soon as they had reached their garret, her unhappy apprehensions were realized.

"We are alone, brother," said she, in despair, "Anselm has not followed us!"

Hugh looked wildly around him, and listened at the door, but no Anselm appeared.

"He avoids us already!" said the brother, "and I dare not suspect her."

"Oh! you are just—I am innocent! Believe, me brother, it is a calumny of which the motive is incomprehensible. Perhaps it is a mistake; but still a cruel one. Promise me not to share it."

"I swear it to you, by my father, my faith, my God!"

"Thanks, thanks, dear brother, for I deserve not this bitter injury!"

While she thus supplicated on her knees, her brother seemed hesitating.

"And yet they say there are witnesses—proofs! I believe you, Helena. But why—Oh why—do they accuse you? We have never been bad neighbours, or faithless friends. They ought surely to esteem, instead of humiliating us!"

"What have I done in the eyes of God, that I am thus afflicted?" faltered the poor girl, in despair.

Hugh was about to return to the assembled groups when the door opened, and Anselm, pale and trembling, entered the room. Before his future brother-in-law could question him, he took his hand.

"I am come to say farewell, brother!" said he. "I must quit Offenbach! You had best do the same, for I know all. It is but too true! Your sister has deceived us!"

Helena shrieked aloud. Anselm was about to retire, but Hugh detained him by the arm.

"Is it true, Anselm?"

"I have seen the money given as the price of little Fritz's silence."

"How can a mere child be implicated in the supposed crime of Helena?"

"Fritz fell in yesterday with the rascal who took advantage of our absence."

"What infamy!" exclaimed Helena.

"It is too true. The whole town accuses you. No one will speak to you, or even endure your presence, till you have disproved it. It costs me dear to leave you, for I loved you most sincerely! But I will never be the husband of one who does not possess an honest heart!"

"Anselm, take heed of what you say! Remember that you now reject the hand of Helena!"

"I know well what I say. I have heard too much within this last hour. I am lost—my heart is broken! Farewell—I must hasten away! She who bears my name must be respected!"

"Anselm!—you, too, to have been persuaded of my guilt!"—

"It is impossible for me to doubt it, when all well-thinking people agree in condemning you."

"I place more trust in my sister's word than in the chattering of idle gossips," cried Hugh.

"The whole city would not accuse your sister without reason. The pieces of gold given to

Fritz suffice in proof. Inquire of him about the man in the velvet cloak—do you hear, Helena?—the man in the velvet cloak! Adieu! all is over!"

"Shall I not see you again?"

"Never!"

Such was his last word. Hugh would fain have detained him. But he retired abruptly, shutting the door after him.

"Listen, oh listen, Anselm!—leave us not so!" exclaimed Hugh, re-opening the door. But Anselm was gone.

"I shall die!" faltered the young girl. "He never—never loved me!"

The departure of Anselm made a severe infliction upon the heart of Helena's brother, who giving vent to his rage, cursed him as treacherous and ungrateful. Still, an inward feeling prompted him to justify the conduct of his friend.

"Anselm," thought he, "has not merely listened to the suggestions of some malicious gossips. It is not on the pretext of an ill-founded report that he has abandoned his companion in labour, his brother, his friend from infancy. It was not till the whole town re-echoed with the shame of my sister, that he

proscribed himself as if to escape the disgrace of a family to which he was about to belong. He deemed himself contemptible when he found his future bride despised! Had he been vindictive or ungrateful, he would have added his voice to those which calumniated Helena, and have remained in a town where he was sure of employment, as well as consolation in his sorrow. His habits, his personal interests, all tended to detain him at Offenbach. Yet he departed! This must have been both conviction and despair; for he was an honest man, and the tears which he vainly tried to suppress, were a sufficient testimony of his sensibility!"

It was not thus that Helena reasoned. She could only deny the crime which her neighbours offered to prove. After a long silence, interrupted only by the sobbings of the young embroideress, her brother resumed,

"For the last time, sister, tell me, I entreat, whether you be guilty or no!"

Helena was about to answer.

"Wait!"—interrupted her brother; and having opened a large press, he took from one of the shelves a thick volume, which he presented to his sister.

"You know this book? It is the bible, in

which our father taught us to read. All oaths made in the presence of such a witness, are registered in heaven; and we must render account of these at the day of judgment. Dare you swear, upon the page in which is inscribed your birth, that you are free from reproach in this thing?"

Helena wiping her eyes, replied with a firm voice

"I CAN!"—

Hugh looked sternly at his sister, and took down, word by word, the oath as it was uttered.

"And now," said he, "I need no testimony from others. But Anselm must also be convinced of her innocence. I will go forth, Helena, and interrogate those who pretend to have proofs. Fear nothing, I will listen calmly—will weigh their reasons—and trace the source of the calumny; and I promise you to be prudent until I have discovered the author of this vile defamation."

Having several times reassured his sister, who feared some fresh exposure, he went out.

His first care was to seek the boy Fritz, whom he at last discovered in a group of children. Poor Hugh questioned him closely, but the

little fellow had so often repeated the story of the gentleman in the velvet cloak, that he still adhered to his assertions.

"Should you know him, were you to see him again?" inquired Hugh.

"Perhaps;" said the boy, unwilling to be interrupted at his game of marbles.

"But you say he spoke to you?"

"I might know him again, were I to see him. But let me go on playing. It is my turn, and I must knuckle down."

"If I leave you now, you must come with me to-morrow."

"Where?"

"To-morrow you shall know."

Poor Hugh, nothing doubting the uncertainty of Fritz, but equally convinced of the innocence of his sister, had conceived a project not to be revealed to her. He returned home with a calm face, and Helena thought, for a moment, he had succeeded in confounding her accusers.

"What have you done?" inquired she.

"All goes on well;—take courage, Helena," said he.

"Here is a letter from Anselm," said she, in her turn. "I thought I had lost his esteem,

but I was wrong. Read it; you will find he is as much to be pitied as we are."

Hugh then read the letter.

"It is now two hours since I quitted Offenbach, and for two whole hours have I been broken-hearted. Hugh must pardon me if I had not courage to stay and assist him in this unhappy business, but I could not remain in a town where I heard at every step—'There goes Anselm the dupe!'—I shall go far away to seek work in some place where the fault of Helena is unknown—her imputed fault I mean, for now that I am no longer stunned by the murmurs of our neighbours, now that tears have assuaged my grief—my memory returns. I think of the many kindnesses, of the undeviating friendship of these five years past. I remember all that Hugh would have done for me, I remember the embroidered cravat, and then I say, as I always should have said:—the sister of Hugh cannot be guilty!—For a moment, God forgive me, I indeed thought her guilty, having seen the witness who received money to be silent!—God knows from whence came the florins shewn by the cooper George, who is too great a toper to have put by such a sum, and too honest a man to

deny the source from whence it came. I almost seem to doubt again, but for the last time! My friends, for so you will ever be, as soon as I am established elsewhere, I will let you know, for I imagine it will be no more possible for you than me, to live at Offenbach. You can come to me, for our projects may be realised here as well as where you are; and we will forget the past. Wish me courage: for I am in want of it, but *you* will need it more than I, if you determine to remain in a town, in which I never dreamed that we should either of us have cause to blush."

"We will go to him, brother, shall we not?" said Helena as soon as he had read the letter of Anselm.

"We will!" he replied adding in a lower tone, "when my sister shall be proved innocent."

Hugh, who had determined upon the conduct he should pursue, though he said not a word to his sister, took up a book in order to avoid alluding to the painful scene of the morning, and read aloud. Helena, seated near the window, but not daring to look into the street, listened with resignation, an occasional tear rolling down her cheek; above all

when she heard the merry voices of her companions passing under the window proceeding to the dance.

"No one," thought she, "no one has a right to be gayer or happier than I have; yet I am doomed to weep and suffer while *they* laugh and dance."

Thus passed away the evening. Next morning, Hugh went forth, as if to his usual work, but in reality to seek the parents of the boy Fritz.

"It is your child who has been the cause of all this mischief; and it is he who must now assist me," said he. "According to the sum given by the infamous detractor of Helena, he must be a man of wealth; and from his appearance, I have decided, like you, that he must even be a nobleman of the court. You must permit me, therefore, to take Fritz, and we shall station ourselves at the gate of the palace, where we will watch both those who enter and those who come out, whether publicly or privately. God will assist me in my perseverance, and in the end I must discover our enemy. Yes, were it Maximilian himself, he shall restore my sister the fair fame sacrificed by a cowardly lie."

"Have a care, Master Hugh," observed the mother of Fritz; "if he be too powerful a personage, there is no knowing what may happen."

"It matters not," replied the indignant brother; "no human power shall prevent my keeping the oath I made to my father! I swore to defend my sister's fame. Preserve her from calumny I could not; but to seek out the calumniator I am determined."

"At least," said the trembling woman, "do not mix us up in it; it is not our fault if our neighbour Helena have such smart acquaintances; we do not busy ourselves with our neighbours' affairs: we only look to our own."

On hearing this allusion to the intimacy of his sister with some important individual, Hugh felt the blood rush to his face; but he had presence of mind to control his feelings.

"Don't alarm yourself, my good woman," said he; "your name shall not be pronounced. I only tell you, it would have been as well had you been as cautious before you spread so unfounded a report. It would have been more humane had you previously warned me. But I forgive you. One is not master of one's words when under a feeling of indignation. I repeat

to you, therefore, fear nothing; I will not mention your name, even if we go before a court of justice. I make but one condition, which is, that you communicate to no one my project for detecting the slanderer. There is a mystery in all this, of which I shall with difficulty arrive at the source. A word from you might mar my project."

"I promise to be silent, my dear neighbour. But you must tell me all you discover: for your story goes to my heart."

"I have your word then?"

"You may depend upon me, as I upon *you*; to know all."

Fritz, who under fear of a maternal chastisement, promised to keep their purpose secret, now followed Hugh to the door of the palace.

The courtiers were arriving; the attendants passing to and fro in the court-yard; the bustle announcing the appearance of the Landgrave. Poor Hugh, with his eyes fixed on the principal entrance, pointed out every now and then to the child, the different personages as they passed. But the little fellow replied, "No, that is not him!" and again stood watching.

After waiting four hours, the heart of the

workman being in a state of torture, the Landgrave came out of his palace, followed by his courtiers and suite. The boy stood close to Hugh, who gazed at them one by one as they passed. Maximilian came first, and Hugh pointed him out to the boy, who replied, "No, that is not the lord I saw."

Next came the Count of Hatzfeld. "No!" said the child.

"And that one, the Baron Walbeck?"—

"No!" again replied Fritz.

"And this one?"

It was Count Otto, but without a velvet cloak; and Fritz replied "No," as he had to those who preceded, as well as those who followed.

The Prince galloped away, and the court quickly disappeared.

"Let us be gone," said Hugh to Fritz; "we will return to-morrow."

The next day, at the same hour, they were at their post. But when they arrived before the palace, the court-yard was filled with equipages. The Princess Clementina had returned to the Residence, and all were flocking to pay their court to her. It was a gala-day at the palace. The guards were doubled; the entrance

denied to all who did not wear the livery
court.

Hugh was in his working dress. The
out to him twenty times to keep off,
many times did he and the child cree
under the mask of the carriages. Se
last that all his efforts were useless, h
said, " We will return to-morrow !"—

From morrow to morrow, eight days e
without his detecting the individual he
tinaciously sought. He now began to
the possibility of success. Still, public
nation against his sister did not subside.
affair of the ten florins was the universal
of the gossips of Offenbach ; the mothe
advising their daughters to avoid Hele
lads still looking at her with a sneer;
ever she dare set foot in the street. The
always a whispering when she entered
where the owner scarcely deigned to r
her ; and she always returned in tears
garret.

" We shall soon quit the town, sh
not ?" said she, every evening to her b
" I am too humiliated here — I cou
support it much longer. It is beyo
strength."

And every evening, her brother replied—

"One day more, sister. Courage! and you shall cease to weep."

On the eighth day, however, he said to himself—

"I will discover our enemy, or he is not to be found in the court of the Landgrave."

Next day, he returned with Fritz to their old station at the gate of the palace, and kept him close by his side.

"Here," said he, to the child, "is a piece of gold, which shall be yours, if you will only say to each of the courtiers, as they pass, 'My mother thanks you kindly for the ten florins you gave her the other evening.'"

The eyes of Fritz flashed with joy, on seeing the piece of gold sparkle in the sun, and he promised to repeat the words exacted by Hugh. The moment he saw one of the courtiers, he ran up to him, saying—

"My mother thanks you, for the ten florins you gave her."

At first, they thought him mad, and went their way. At last, one of them stopped, and smiling at the child, handed him a piece of money, which Hugh observed; though Fritz and the courtier were at some distance, he overheard the latter say,

"So! you little chattering urchin, you have been talking? Never mind; take this, and be more prudent another time."

Otto now hurried into the palace, but Hugh had observed him too closely to forget his countenance.

Imagine the feelings of the mechanic, when confronted with the calumniator of Helena's fame. His blood boiled in his veins, and his arm was involuntary raised to strike his enemy. He was, however, compelled to suppress his wrath; as it was not by a personal strife he could hope to restore his sister's reputation. Such an exposure might only injure her cause. He therefore gave the thaler to the child, who observed—

"*That* was the man of the velvet cloak!"—

"Enough!" said Hugh. "You may now go and play again."

Fritz did not wait to be told twice, but ran off to his mother, to inform her that he had at last seen the great lord who gave florins to little boys.

Now that he knew the person of the gentleman in the velvet cloak, Hugh wished to get rid of the child. It was not before him he chose to ask his enemy's name of the sentry at the gate, which he alone ought to know.

He was resolved to fight the offender, whatever might be his quality at court. Several hours did poor Hugh tarry before the gate of the palace, waiting the coming out of the minister.

At length, he recognised him among a group of courtiers to whom the sentry presented arms.

When the group had passed on, Hugh went up to him—

"Who was the nobleman who separated himself from the rest, and took the side of the avenue?"

"His Excellency the Count Otto, first minister of the Landgrave," replied the soldier.

"The first minister!"—repeated the mechanic, with mingled joy and indignation, as he took the road back to his humble garret.

The mechanic preserved strict silence concerning his discovery. He desired to convince himself, beyond a doubt, in the first place that Helena was not the accomplice of the minister. The air of assurance, and tone of frivolity assumed by Otto, in addressing the boy were sufficient to rekindle a doubt in the heart of Hugh.

After a night devoted to conceiving and re-

jecting a variety of projects, the workman adopted a most simple idea, which seemed to him an inspiration from Heaven, and he resolved to submit it forthwith to Helena.

"The Landgrave is to hunt in the forest to-day," said he to Helena; "let us go and see the sport. Long have I wished for the pleasure; and you must bear me company!"

For some time, she refused; but as Hugh had a particular object in view, he persisted, —she gave her consent.

In spite of his firmness of purpose, poor Hugh trembled as he was on the point of arriving with his sister near the assembled hunt. It was there his destiny was to be decided. It was, perhaps, the last time he should ever address his only sister in terms of affection. In his irresistible agitation, he found himself convulsively pressing his sister's hand.

"You are not well: let us return home!" said she. "What business have we here?"

Hugh was almost tempted to comply, but his state of incertitude was insupportable. He wished to probe the story to the bottom, though he might die of shame and despair.

"I must amuse myself sometimes," said he. "You, too, require relaxation. You will

find that we shall be gayer and happier for it when we return home."

"*Happier!*"—replied Helena, with a sigh.

Her brother now changed the conversation, lest she should suspect the object of their walk.

The Landgrave and his court had already been hunting some time, when Hugh and his sister arrived. The sound of the horn, and reports of the rifles, at first directed their steps; but the noise receding into the depths of the forest, they paused at the intersection of some roads, uncertain which way they should pursue.

At last, some gentlemen of the hunt approached. Rodolph von Hatzfeld, on seeing Helena, exclaimed,

"A pretty girl, as I live!"

A second hunter checked his horse before Hugh and his sister; and the former instantly trembled from head to foot—for it was Count Otto who stood before them!

Helena, who had cast down her eyes on hearing the compliment of Rodolph, raised them towards him who now addressed her brother. The eyes of Hugh were fixed upon his sister's face, but it betrayed not the least emotion.

" Have a care, good people," said the minister. " You will be hurt by some chance shot."

Helena calmly uttered a formal acknowledgment; and the heart of poor Hugh leapt for joy!—Mechanically following the guidance of his sister, the whole court soon passed them by. But scarcely were the courtiers out of sight, when Hugh, raising his hands to Heaven, exclaimed,

" God be thanked, my sister is innocent."—

Helena could not comprehend this pious ejaculation of her brother; but her surprise was still greater when Hugh threw himself into her arms.

" Forgive me," cried he, " I was still doubtful!"—

" And how know you now that I did not deserve your suspicions?"—

" I have proof! He whom you just now saw was our enemy. I watched your looks; I sought for agitation in your voice; and in your eyes I read the purity of your soul. Once more, forgive me, Helena! I required such proof; for, during the last week, I can scarcely have been said to live."

On learning that she had been in the pre-

sence of the man who had blasted her reputation, Helena nearly lost her senses.

"We need go no further," said the brother. "Let us now leave Offenbach; for I cannot convince my neighbours, as I am convinced myself; and it is my duty to spare you their contempt. This evening, I will accompany you to Frankfort, to our cousin Furtz. The report of our troubles has not reached him; and I will find a pretext for leaving you there some days, during which, I will accomplish my projects. When you return to Offenbach, all shall be well with us."

Helena consented to her brother's propositions. That evening she accompanied him to Frankfort, and in the interim the minister received a demand for an audience, signed "Hugh Sterner, the locksmith."

CHAPTER IV.

The inhabitants of Offenbach accounted in various ways for the return of the Landgravine to the palace. The well-disposed part of the community attributed it to a newly-conceived affection, on the part of Maximilian, for the Landgravine. The old gossips, ever ready to pervert the truth, asserted that it was a mere woman's fancy, in order to thwart the pleasures of her husband. Certain ladies, provoked at her return, chose to assign the motive to a ridiculous fit of jealousy. But few knew the real secret; and even the court was in error in thinking the Landgravine was come to pacify, by her presence, the noblemen whose indignation had been aroused by the affront offered them by the late nocturnal visit.

Count Otto was the bearer of a name long celebrated in the small town of Dessau. Ulric Spulgen, his grandfather, had deserved the esteem of the learned, the confidence of the

nobles, and the affection of the people, in his double vocation as physician and minister of the gospel. Educated by this respectable individual, Otto early contracted studious habits, but, less modest in his ambition than his grandfather, the end to which his ambition tended, rose in proportion as the circle of his acquaintance extended itself. Tranquil and studious, he was anxious to rise in the world. Otto could not understand how the venerable Ulric Spulgen, corresponding with all that was eminent in Europe, could rest so contented with his provincial practice, when his reputation had more than once caused him to be summoned to the imperial court of Vienna. He also wondered that a minister of the gospel, whose eloquence was fit for a court, should consent to vegetate in a place where his admirable sermons were solely appreciated with reference to their moral perfection.

"Your arduous studies reap no fruit, grandfather," he sometimes observed.

"Are not the virtues I behold in practice round me, the most abundant harvest a minister can implore of God?"—replied the venerable man.

"But the composition of your discourses, the richness of style, the ingenious thoughts,

and profound maxims, are of no avail in such a place as this?"

"My dear child," replied the venerable ecclesiastic, "those who work for heaven must do their best; and as my rich and copious style is pretty well understood here, I do not see why I should alter it, or my place of residence."

But though thus modest for himself, he did not renounce ambition for his grandson. In the course of a dangerous illness of Maximilian's father, Ulric Spulgen had the good fortune to send from the retreat of his study certain useful counsels to his friend, the physician of the Landgrave of Isenbourg; and the Prince, informed of his obligation, wrote to Dr. Spulgen, offering the most honourable conditions for him to come and fix himself at Offenbach:—"My Lord," wrote he, in reply; "your highness must forgive my refusal of so distinguished a proposition; but at Dessau, I have invalids both in body and soul, who look to me for aid, and whom I cannot abandon. I have, however, a grandson, Otto Spulgen, who wishes for a profession as a lawyer, physician, or professor of mathematics. He is a proficient in painting; and as a musician, is a worthy emulator of our countryman, Jean Sebastian Bach. Your highness's protection

will be well bestowed upon him. Pardon me if I entreat one more favour of your highness. It is understood that there exists in the library of the palace, an autograph MS. of Cæsar Nostradamus, entitled, "The Hippiad, or Godfroy and the Knights, by Cæsar Nostradamus, by a nobleman of Provence, 1622." I possess also an autograph MS. of that poem, but there is a leaf wanting, and I should not be sorry to complete it; and offer to your highness, for the loan of this volume, my estate of Erbach as security."

This letter was presented to the Prince by young Otto himself. The old Landgrave sent back the precious MS. to the doctor of Dessau; but detained the young man, who shortly became the preceptor and friend of the young Prince, being nearly of the same age.

Though of opposite characters, they were so intimate, that the Landgrave, philosopher enough to like a plebeian to be the companion of the studies and pastimes of the Prince, but respecting the prejudices of the court, solicited a title of the Emperor for his son's preceptor. The monarch, judging in his supreme wisdom that he could not confer honours on the grandson during the life-time of him who had de-

served the distinction, raised the old doctor to the dignity of Count, making the title hereditary in the family of the far-famed preacher. Some months afterwards, the poor of Dessau wept over their pastor and physician; and thus, his ambitious grandson became Count Otto von Spulgen.

Soon afterwards, the young Prince succeeded to the sovereignty of his father, and Otto became his intimate counsellor—a favour fatal to the ministry of the defunct Landgrave. The Baron de Rœdelheim, who had enjoyed the power of place for thirty years, was forced to resign his office to the hands of the young favourite. It was supposed that the retired minister had consoled himself for the loss of office, in marrying one of the richest heiresses of the principality. We all know the rancour possible in the heart of a German baron.

But though the young Landgrave listened to the counsels of his minister in matters of state, he was not quite so tractable in the less important question of his pleasure. Maximilian, sometimes allowed himself to laugh at the severe injunctions of his friend.

One day however, he ceased to laugh; for Otto addressed him with tears in his eyes.

"Your highness," said he, "weary of the caprices of his fair friend, appears resolved to marry; and that which might pass for an act of prudence, is in my eyes but an act of additional folly. To-morrow you are to be clandestinely married; you see that I am acquainted with your proceedings! She whom you would raise to the exalted station of your bride is the daughter of the banker Wolf. Marry her if you love her, Prince; but I warn you, your passion will soon subside, and the people will despise the Princess you present to them. I have faith in the qualities of Mademoiselle Wolf; but I must watch over the sacred charge of your honour, which you have confided to me. Contract this alliance, and this very day I lay at your feet my insignia of office, I renounce all further dignities, and your friendship, that I may retire into obscurity and weep over the shame with which you have disgraced your house."

By this argument, the minister succeeded in deterring Maximilian from the folly he meditated; and having with great difficulty persuaded his royal master to turn his thoughts to a more suitable alliance, Otto, aware of the wavering character of the Landgrave, lost

no time in searching the reigning houses of Germany, for a Princess worthy the title of Landgravine of Isenbourg. He soon fixed his choice upon the Princess Clementine of Altingen; and, as he had promised, Maximilian abided by the decision of his minister. Clementine was pretty young, confiding; and from the day of the wedding, her husband adored her.

Meanwhile the grace, beauty, and amiably docile character of the Princess, made a profound impression upon the minister charged to negociate the marriage with the Prince of Altingen; and Otto remained mute with admiration, when the Princess, addressing him, inquired into the character of her future husband with that ingenuous freedom of language, that touching simplicity of manners, which the German Princes transmit from generation to generation, as a counterpoise to their aristocratic pride. From that day, Otto ceased to find happiness in the position to which destiny had raised him. He now began to curse the moment in which he had interfered with the matrimonial projects of Maximilian. Had the daughter of the banker Wolf borne the title of Landgravine, he would

only have had to fear the enmity of woman, but now it was against an ardent and increasing passion he had to resist.

At the expiration of six months Maximilian ceased to love his Princess; and it happened that she confided her despair to the only man who could behold, with satisfaction, the indifference of the Prince. Otto interceded warmly with the Prince in favour of Clementine. But Maximilian panted for other pleasures, other conquests; and bidding his minister desist from his importunate remonstrances, made known to the Landgravine that since the palace of Offenbach had ceased to suit her, the Château de Beauséjour, some miles from the city, was at her disposal. Clementine wept bitterly; but remained near her husband, hoping to regain his love and affection.

Thus passed the first year; the Princess assuming, in public, an air of content, while in the solitude of her apartment she gave herself up to grief. Otto, her sole comforter, gave her hope, seeking to pacify her tears by condoling with her upon the neglect of the Landgravine; and when two beings equally unhappy pour forth their tears in unison, and confound their sighs—when hands grasp each

other daily, and the heart of woman inclines towards another, equally despairing—rank, duty, distance are soon effaced. An evil hour had struck for Count Otto and his royal mistress!

It was not to avoid the scandalous irregularities of her husband that the Landgravine quitted her residence; nor was it from caprice or jealousy, or to conciliate Maximilian, that she resolved to return to the chateau of Offenbach after so long an absence. The safety of Otto was at stake. The love of the Princess for the minister—her interest in his fame—the gratification of seeing him every day, every moment, without the life or honour of either being again placed in jeopardy—was the true motive of the Princess's return. The Landgrave saw her arrival with complete indifference, for he was passionately attached to another.

On Otto's return from the chase, the petition of Helena's brother was placed in his hand. Hugh had purposely omitted mentioning the object of his demand; but Otto was only too happy that the Princess had quitted the retirement of Beauséjour, not to satisfy, to the best of his power, all claims addressed to him. He gave orders that the mechanic, Hugh Sterner, should be admitted to him the following morn-

ing; and at eight o'clock, Hugh desired to see his Excellency.

"Let him enter!" said the minister to his secretary; and the blacksmith appeared in the presence of the Count von Spulgen. His bearing was firm, and his look calm; still, the tremulousness of his voice announced internal agitation. Ignorant of the cause, Otto received him kindly.

"Be seated, my good friend, and speak freely!" said he; "I esteem highly the honest members of your calling. If your demand be just, be assured that I will try to satisfy you."

"My Lord, your task is not difficult; I come to ask for justice!"

"You shall have it, my good friend; an honest man never sought it in vain at my hands! Speak out; you shall not repent it!"

"I am grateful for your Excellency's goodness. I will now explain myself with the frankness of one honest man dealing with another."

The minister looked surprised.

"What mean you, Sterner? Am *I* in question in your petition?"

"*Yourself*, my Lord! who, by an atrocious lie, have reduced an honest family to despair.

Interrupt me not; you will soon understand me. A young girl, whom you do not know even by name, and against whom you can have no vindictive motive, is at this moment an object of scorn to the whole city. And why? Because it pleased *you*, a powerful Lord, enjoying the public esteem, to blast with a word the fair fame of a stranger!"

"You are in error, my friend," replied the Count, utterly amazed. "I am Count Otto von Spulgen. God is my witness, that ——"

"Blaspheme not your Maker, my Lord! I will refresh your faulty memory. I can conceive that a mere lordly pastime may have escaped your recollection, for in *your* eyes the honour of an humble work-girl—the young embroideress of the street of the White Eagle—can be of poor account."

In a moment, the minister recalled to mind the adventure of the garret-window—the child asleep upon the stone—and the ten florins he had given upon pretence of buying the boy's silence! Remarking the confusion of Otto, the locksmith persisted.

"Your Excellency must remember now what he said the other day with regard to my sister?"

"And if I do," stammered the Count, "what is it you wish me to do for you?"

"Let me first convince you of the injury you have done us;—you shall then tell me how it can be compensated."

"I am most willing to make atonement," faltered Otto. "I was wrong, *very* wrong—but, I implore you, let this be a secret between us—I rely on your discretion. Say, what sum do you exact of me?"

"Do you imagine it is money that we require, my Lord?" said Helena's brother with indignation. "Do you think that riches could restore the honour of my sister? I know not the price you set upon that of your great ladies; but *our* wives and sisters are valued by a different standard!"

Otto, who was directing his steps towards his bureau, doubtless in search of the gold he intended to offer to the mechanic, paused upon hearing this answer.

"Sterner," said he, "you are a worthy man, and I would give worlds never to have pronounced the name of your sister."

"I believe you, my Lord! I hear you have a generous heart; and it must have been from some uncontrollable motive that you uttered

so unfounded a calumny. But when you selected our name to be polluted with a shame which you alone can efface, you were not aware that my father had relinquished all hope of fortune, that he descended from an honourable profession to one of painful labour, for the sake of preserving the name which you have blasted! You little thought that the innocent girl, whose name has been sacrificed, was an object of the most tender solicitude to a brother, who had sworn to his dying father to be her protector, her support, to watch over the precious treasure of her fair reputation. And when I had worked for full ten years, holding sacred the oath to my father, at the moment I was to reap the reward of my efforts, at the moment my sister was betrothed to my dearest friend, you, my Lord, you, with a word, have blasted all my joy! The companion of my childhood, the betrothed of my sister, has abandoned us. Helena is compelled to conceal herself from the contempt of the town; and I myself must have yielded, but for my firm resolve to restore her to honour. Yes, my Lord, my firm resolve. If you refuse me justice this day, I will find means to obtain it."

"Sterner," said the minister, having attentively listened to the narrative of the locksmith, "your reproaches fall far short of the remorse your words have caused me! Believe me, that, were it in my power to restore to you the reputation you so well deserve, I would do it at the risk of sacrificing the esteem of the world, to which I also attach some value. But if it be a public declaration you require, I warn you that it is impossible. You see I am as frank as yourself. In your position, I would act as you have done; in mine, you would act as I am acting."

"That is to say, my Lord, that you entrench yourself behind your rank to insult me with impunity. But reflect a moment! If forced to it by your refusal, I will reach you, even at the right hand of the throne. I once more ask you, will you, in presence of witnesses appointed by me, declare the innocence of my sister?—Can you prove where you were on the 15th of September, at ten in the evening?—For I swear to you, it shall be proved beyond a doubt, that you were not in the company of Helena Sterner."

Horror struck by these words, Otto sank back into his chair.

"It is impossible!" said he, "I will declare nothing. Take my whole fortune, if you will; but no other reparation can I make you."

"You turn pale!" cried Sterner; "there is then, some dreadful mystery attached to this? Good! I will unravel it—will publish it. Since you refuse terms of peace, war is declared between us. From this day, I will keep watch over your looks and actions. My vengeance shall weigh you down, and however exalted your position, you shall not escape. My hatred shall last till my sister be fully justified. Adieu!"

Another moment, and the door had closed upon the locksmith.

"He has done his duty nobly," faltered the minister of Maximilian. "Let me be equally firm to mine."

CHAPTER V.

A MONTH had elapsed since the terrible menace of the mechanic, but as yet, no symptom of vengeance intruded upon the security of the minister. Otto was less fearful, though on the days following the interview, he had, with some alarm, discovered that Helena's brother had contrived to escape the vigilance of the police. He discovered that Hugh had not returned to his garret in the street of the White Eagle. Some pretended to have met him on the Frankfort road, others on the road to Obernbourg. Some had spoken to him in the forest, some on the bridge. At the same hour, he was said to have been met on many different points.

Hugh Sterner, meanwhile, had not quitted Offenbach. As a native of the town, the usages and customs of the inhabitants were familiar to him. He knew on what days the streets were frequented; in which quarter one might walk unnoticed in the evening; by what

issue one could reach the country, or re-enter unobserved. Concealed in the house of a sure friend, he went every day into the forest to meditate his projects of vengeance, and managed in returning to gather information from some gossiping valet of the court, as to where or how Count Otto had passed the day—why he remained so long at the palace, and at what hour he returned home. But this did little to forward his projects, for all he heard concerning Otto was great and generous. If he went out earlier than usual, it was sure to prove for some benevolent purpose; if he remained long at the chateau, it was to persuade the Prince to some measure beneficial to the interests of the people. Hugh heard on all sides the blessings of the poor and the good-will of the citizens, lavished on the name of the minister!

Still there were some who detested Otto. The mechanic was not the only one who panted for his downfall:—there were disappointed and jealous courtiers who watched closely the proceedings of the favourite. Vainly did the anxious Princess implore him to control the workings of his heart. Vainly did she study his looks, and the expression of his voice; nay, vainly did the Count himself

assume a respectful coldness of demeanour. The malicious eye of envy plunged into the thoughts of the lovers; and detected the sentiments they so vainly strove to repress. Neither an incautious word, nor an involuntary expression had revealed the truth of their intimacy. Yet it was whispered in the circles of the court, that Maximilian was not only lost in dissolute habits, but that he was wilfully blind to the indifference of a wife who no longer regretted his desertion.

The old Baron of Rœdelheim, who was wedded to a former favourite of the Landgrave, with whom he had received a large dowry in compensation of her shame, writhed under the idea of a man of such obscure birth, receiving the favours of a royal hand. But in this coalition against the favourite minister, there wanted one of those dauntless, daring spirits, who flinch from no danger, and die rather than reveal their thoughts and projects; one of those stern, inflexible characters, rarely seen but in times of revolution. Conspiracies reveal the existence of such people, and render them heroes and martyrs. Such an instrument was essential to the discontented of Offenbach.

The brother of Helena was only too ready

to be the tool of Otto's enemies; and as those who cherish the same intense desire are sure to meet at last, Hugh Sterner was not long in leaguing himself with the conspirators.

In his daily excursions in the neighbourhood of the palace, the mechanic often encountered the courtiers returning from the court of the Landgrave; and during his wanderings in the forest, frequently met certain faces reminding him of the joyous companions of the Prince of Isenbourg. This circumstance could not but attract his notice. By degrees, he learnt from certain inmates of the palace their individual names; and remarked that he met them twice in one day, in different places, and different costumes.

Convinced that there must be some important motive, to make them assemble at nightfall, at the obscure inn of Saint Hubert du Bois, situated in the heart of the forest, Hugh remembered that the Baron de Rœdelheim had been forced to cede his post to the favourite of Maximilian.—"It is only the dead," quoth the proverb, "who pardon their successors!" Hugh was acquainted with this maxim of official life; and guessed that Count Otto must enter for something into these mysterious meetings. At

the hazard of his life, he resolved to penetrate the secret.

On the day he made this determination, the locksmith went forth into the forest; and taking the path with some self-styled carters and peasants, followed them into a lower apartment of the inn, where others awaited them. They stopped talking the moment he appeared, and every head concealed itself beneath a broad-brimmed hat. Among the fifteen or twenty individuals assembled, nothing was heard but an indistinct murmur, and the clink of goblets.

Hugh instantly took a seat; and calling for drink, tried to join in the conversation. No one heeded what he said; and disappointed in his attempts, he, at length, threw down his goblet on the table.

"This wine is execrable!" said he. "It is at best good enough to drown Count Otto von Spulgen!"

All present eyed him with mistrust.

"I am not rich," he persisted, "but I would willingly pay the price of a butt of it, to be applied to such a purpose."

The daring peasants whispered to each other, and one gave the signal of departure.

"I suspect," said Hugh, as they rose from

table, " I am not the only person present who would subscribe to the measure."

His companions now hastened to depart, but Hugh stopped them on the threshold.

" What think you, Count Ursel ?"—said he, addressing one of them.

The apostrophe was too precise to admit of further disguise.

They all turned round, exclaiming—

" We are betrayed ! He is a spy !"

" No, Monsieur de Stolberg," exclaimed Hugh, " you behold an accomplice sent by Heaven !"

Upon a sign from Baron Rœdelheim, the doors were now bolted. Swords and pistols were laid upon the table, and one of the conspirators addressed the undaunted mechanic.

" If you are deceiving us—we have confederates waiting for us in the forest, and should we hear a signal, can escape without being seen, and leave you lifeless on the floor."

The locksmith retained his former composure.

" My life belongs to the enemies of Count Otto !" said he. " I ask no better than to sacrifice it in so useful a purpose. Search me !

you will find I am come unarmed; certain that you will provide me with weapons (not for assassination—such noble lords cannot contemplate such horrors) but to defend myself, in case you confide to me a perilous mission."

The old Baron, who had not yet spoken, now addressed the mechanic.

"What security have we?—We know you not?"

"Nor I you!" abruptly answered Hugh. "Yet, you see, I trust you with my life, which though of no value, is that of an honest man, burning with a just desire of vengeance. I should have preferred other means of obtaining justice for the affront offered to my family, by our common enemy. But I must accept the opportunity that offers."

These words, uttered with the rude simplicity of a German mechanic, seemed to impress the conspirators. The Baron at length grasped the hand of Hugh, in token of patronization.

"For life and death," said he, grinding his teeth. And in spite of their pride of birth, these nobles grasped the horny hands of the mechanic—a conspiracy reducing all conditions

to the same level, till the danger is at an end; when the meaner instrument is often flung aside, or perhaps given up to the scaffold. Interrogated concerning the motive of his hatred to the minister, Hugh related the history of the ten florins—of his sister's dishonour—his separation from his friend, and the flight of Helena.

The nobles pretended, of course, to sympathize eagerly with his misfortunes; but no sooner had he alluded to his conversation with the minister, and Otto's refusal to state where he was on the evening of the 15th Sept. than a malicious joy flashed in their eyes.

"He was at the Landgravine's!" cried all present. "We had long suspected as much."

"At the Landgravine's?" replied Hugh, in utter amazement. "Now, then, I hold this mighty secret! Now, I understand all But we will prove to him that the honor of an humble work girl is of as high a value as that of a royal Princess. I swear that he shall confess his crime. I pity the Princess. She is benevolent—the people love her. It will go to my heart to prove her ruin."

"But the justification of your sister?" cried the conspirators. "Do you not see that to save

the reputation of an adultress, the fair fame of your sister has been sacrificed; and, as you said just now, the honour of an humble work-girl is as of high a value as that of a reigning Princess. Besides, you cannot retract; your name belongs to us; and when we resume the reins of power, your fortune is made."

"I have but one favour to ask," said the locksmith, "that if I fall, you will restore Helena to the esteem of her neighbours. On this condition, I espouse your cause; and you may dispose of my life."

Having taken the oaths required by his accomplice, Hugh Sterner undertook to be at the park gate at Offenbach, on the following evening at eight o'clock. Some one was to meet him; they did not name whom. But the stranger was to make himself known by the watchword "Treason."

In vain did the locksmith inquire what further would be wanted of him.

"To-morrow the minister will be compelled to make amends for the injury done to your family," was all the answer he could obtain; and was all he required. Night was advancing! They now separated, and returned to the city.

While the conspirators retired to their

hotels, doffed their peasant garbs, and resumed their costly attire, Hugh Sterner taking the bye road to Offenbach, reached the bank of the river flowing towards Frankfort, taking care not to be observed.

Hearing steps from time to time behind him, he retired into the thick of the wood; but the wayfarer retired also into the wood. The locksmith paused to allow the importunate traveller to pass on; but when he halted, so also did his companion.

"He must be bent on addressing me!" said the mechanic. "Well! one man is as good as another. I will learn, at least, why he follows me." He accordingly went up to the stranger, with a look of resolution.

"Do you wish to speak to me?" asked Hugh, trying to scrutinize the features of the stranger, by the light of the moon.

"I do," replied he. "Have you already forgotten your friends?"

Hugh now recognised one of the conspirators of the forest.

"Where are you going with our secret?" inquired the conspirator.

"I am going to bid my sister farewell, perhaps for the last time. No harm in that, I hope?"

"I must go with you," replied his companion. "It is our duty to watch you closely, till we feel assured of your zeal."

"You have no faith, then, in the honesty of others?"

"We require proofs; and our rewards accord with the merit we discover."

"It is thus," said he, drawing a pistol from his pocket, "we deal with traitors."

"The points of twenty swords, and the muzzles of as many pistols would not suffice to intimidate me, Count Ursel!" said the locksmith; "so put up your weapon---a toy betwixt people of courage. Let my word of honour suffice, for threats are useless. I swear to you, I am going to my sister. Do as you like about following me; or adieu till to-morrow."

"I promised our friends to follow you, wherever you went. I cannot quit you yet."

"You are free to keep your promises; but let us on together, and without mistrust," said Hugh Sterner; and Count Ursel accompanied him part of the way towards Frankfort.

At length, satisfied of the good faith of the mechanic, he left him; reminding him that they should expect him the following evening,

at the park gate, near the river. Hugh repeated the promise, and then proceeded to the abode of his cousin the cordwainer.

Helena received her brother with the utmost tenderness. Without reverting to his terrible project, he intimated that better days were in store for them; and they passed a tranquil night.

Faithful to his promise, the following day the locksmith quitted his sister in time to be at his post at Offenbach.

As he took an affectionate leave of her, and several times pressed to his bosom the injured being for whom he was about to stake his life, Helena became almost alarmed at the expression of his countenance and agitated manner.

"There is nothing to fear," said he, again embracing her. "My farewell word is—HOPE."

At six o'clock he was at the park gate, waiting for Count Ursel, or some other of the conspirators. At length a stranger approached.

"Are you Hugh Sterner, the locksmith?"

"I am!" replied the mechanic.

"Then follow me!" added the stranger.

"I must first hear the word!" said Helena's brother.

"TREASON!" replied the other, in a low voice; and the locksmith allowed himself to be guided by the stranger into an obscure passage adjoining the entrance of the park.

CHAPTER VI.

As they were proceeding along a narrow covered way, they heard a murmur of voices, and the tread of steps as if over their heads. The mechanic instantly inquired of the stranger whither he was leading him.

"Silence!" replied he; "we have already entered the chateau. Should any one address us, it is I who must answer."

They now crossed a yard, in which were situated the offices of the palace. Attendants were flying about in different directions; and amid the bustle, the presence of the two conspirators was not remarked.

"This way!" said the stranger; and they mounted a narrow staircase, feebly lighted by the glimmer of a lamp, suspended from the ceiling at every floor. As he ascended the stairs, Sterner noticed from the window the bank of the river, and the entrance of the park. Within, at a distance, on the various landings, his eye penetrated through long galleries, in

which were suspended chandeliers, shedding their brilliant lustre upon inlaid floors.

"Those are the apartments of the Landgrave! higher still, is the library. To the right, is the passage leading to the suite of Princess Clementine's apartments. At the end, is the famous green chamber; this staircase is appropriated to the service of the gentlemen of the household. Above, are the apartments of the female attendants of the Landgravine. Follow me!"

They now reached the attic story; yet Hugh remained wholly ignorant what service was wanted of him. Astonished at finding himself in the palace of Maximilian, he dared not interrogate his guide, still less recede.

He proceeded, therefore, till ordered to pause before a door in the last passage. The stranger now listened, to assure himself that nobody was on his track.

"Good!" said he. "We are alone!"

Then approaching the door, he whispered —"It is I!"

The door instantly opened.

"Come in!—quick!" said he, pushing Hugh Sterner into a chamber, where sat a woman covered with a veil.

"Is this the man I have been expecting?" inquired she.

The stranger replied in the affirmative, and seated himself; motioning Hugh to do the same, and bidding him listen attentively to the inquiries of the veiled lady.

"There exist strong suspicions, as you are aware, of an intimacy between the minister and Princess Clementine," said she. "Since the return of the Landgravine to the chateau, he has not been known to visit her; still, it is asserted that his voice has been heard in her apartment at hours when she ought to be alone. Several times has the Princess been purposely interrupted, on pretence of believing her to be indisposed; when she is found in a state of great agitation. But the Count has contrived to disappear, in spite of the most scrupulous vigilance. There must be, doubtless, some secret passage, known only in the court, which must be discovered this very night. We rely upon you; trusting that you will not deceive the confidence of those whose only wish is, to convince the Landgrave of the treason of his pretended friend."

"I do not perceive the use of this discovery towards the reputation of my sister!" replied

the locksmith, who had listened attentively to the interrogatories of the veiled lady.

"*How?*" replied she. "Shall we not force the Count to confess that he was at the Château de Beauséjour on the evening of the 15th. My husband has related to me your injuries, and believe me, my good friend, if you serve us, we will not neglect your interests."

"Time is passing," observed the stranger; "the Princess will soon retire to her apartment. We must now acquaint this honest fellow what is expected of him.

"Speak," said Sterner; "I swore to serve you in life or death. You shall see whether I keep my oath."

The veiled lady now resumed,

"There is a state dinner at court," said she; "the Landgravine will not retire to her room before ten o'clock. It is to her chamber I shall conduct you. There, you will remain concealed, and watch the coming-in and going-out of the minister. All night—watch! to-morrow morning, at the hour of her highness' taking her airing, I will meet you, and you can then communicate all you have seen. The Prince will be immediately acquainted with the

whole affair, and so avenge the injury done to your sister."

"And we," said the stranger, with an air of plausible hypocrisy, "*we* shall have the good fortune to have avenged the dignity of the throne, thus disgracefully outraged."

"And if I am discovered?" inquired Sterner.

"By Count Otto?" remarked the veiled lady.

"No, not by *him*, as I then should know how to act—but by the Princess herself, or one of her attendants?"

The stranger turned pale, and the lady uttered an exclamation of terror.

"Good!" replied Hugh; "I understand you; I must hold my tongue, and allow myself to be captured."

"We will save you under any circumstances!" replied the stranger.

"If *possible*, you mean. Well, be it so; but, above all, remember my sister."

"We swear it!" cried his two companions; and thus ended the conversation. The veiled lady rose, took the workman by the hand, made him follow her down the back stairs, till they arrived at the gallery leading to the suite of the Landgravine, which they entered together, without meeting any of the male or female attendants of the Princess.

"Hugh Sterner!" said the new guide of the mechanic, when they arrived in the furthermost room, "here is the bedchamber of the Princess. Take this key: it is that of the glazed closet to the right of the bed—that door is never opened. Adieu!—courage and prudence. God protect you!"

She then shook him by the hand, and departed. Three hours or more passed away without any noise interrupting the meditations of the locksmith—and oppressive they were; thus, reduced to the part of a spy, and obliged to serve the purpose of some court intrigue that he might obtain reparation for his innocent sister, which was only to be expected by an act of baseness! Such was not his idea when, face to face with her calumniator, he had exclaimed, "Henceforward be there open war between us!" He had hoped to fight with the weapons of a man of courage. His cause was a just one: and the act to which he now was urged was revolting to his better feelings. It was by a vile denunciation he was going to be avenged upon a calumny! It was by forcing the secret of a woman against whom he had no motive of hatred, that he was obliged to

arrive at the truth. Indignant with himself, Sterner was about to quit his post!

"No," said he, "I never should have accepted so vile a mission! Sword against sword, blood against blood! Such was the reparation I meant to seek of my enemy; and having conquered him, and trampled him under foot, I should have had the right to dictate my own conditions. In the depth of darkness to strike both innocence and crime with the same blow, is not justice, but to render crime for crime!"

The locksmith would fain have quitted the palace, and abandoned to others the task of betraying the Princess; but the last words of his father were fresh upon his mind—the rumours of the town still vibrated in his ears! He saw himself deserted by his friends; Anselm forced to quit the country, his sister obliged to hide from the public gaze, and thought of the insults she would yet receive, if she again returned to Offenbach. It was not before the tribunals he could hope to seek redress of such an opponent as Count Otto von Spulgen; nor was it by a personal provocation he could hope to avenge his sister. The reply of the German nobles to such provocations is by throwing the individual into a

dungeon, where he expiates his rashness in endless despair.

There was consequently no resource for poor Sterner, and once more he returned into the glazed closet, on hearing steps in the gallery.

It was the Princess, followed by her attendants! among whom, the locksmith seemed to recognize the voice of the veiled lady. On looking through the key-hole, he found he was not mistaken. The eyes of this person were directed towards the door of the glazed closet, while the others surrounding the Princess took off her veil, necklace, and ornaments. On laying aside her state attire, Clementine assumed a more convenient costume. After a few gracious words from the Princess to her ladies, she dismissed them — listening anxiously to their departing steps as they proceeded down the gallery.

The young Landgravine then carefully bolted the doors, and threw herself into an arm-chair, apparently overcome with wretchedness.

"Alas, alas!" murmured she, in a low tone; "what an evening, what fears, what anguish! Why were the malicious eyes of the old Baron constantly fixed upon me? Those signs of intelligence, too, betwixt the enemies of the

Count—what means their air of triumph? And Rodolph von Hatzfeld, who would persist in alluding to a work girl, an embroideress—directing his glances towards Otto! And how depressed he was! Would I could have had one word from his lips before he left us. Does the Landgrave suspect us? Oh! miserable destiny! Oh! retrospections of guilt and remorse!"

She now sank into a deep reverie. After some moments' reflection,

"I have but these means," cried she, rising with an air of resolution; and having rung a bell, and unbolted the door, several attendants entered the room.

"Is her highness indisposed?" was the prompt inquiry.

"I was not well when I rang," replied Clementine. "I am now better. That I may not trouble you again, Beatrix shall remain with me through the night. If her aid suffice not, I will send for you all."

Each of the women now claimed the honour of sitting up; but, upon a sign of dismissal from the Princess, they retired.

Once more alone, she threw herself into the arms of Beatrix.

"My only friend and confidante," cried she, "I am indeed wretched."

"What ails you, Madam?"

"They suspect the truth! All my efforts to conceal it are of no avail! I was this day convinced of it. There is an agitation at Court which fills me with alarm. You alone are in my confidence—you alone are able to advise me—Otto will not come to-night!"

"*To-night?*" replied Beatrix. "You have seen him, then, since you left Beauséjour? Oh! Madam, after all you promised, are you then determined to sacrifice yourself?"

"I *have* seen him! I had not the courage to follow your advice—so wise, so necessary to my peace of mind. I have broken my promises. Were you to require me to renew the oath, I should obey, and then violate it again! I have never loved but him. He only can appreciate my affection for the possession of a whole and undivided heart. At Offenbach I have met but a single smile of genuine tenderness;—it is his—but one truly generous soul—it is his! He has sacrificed his life to me, for it is certain death to aspire to the wife of one's sovereign. I was so young! I desired so earnestly to be loved! And then I heard only of his high qualities—

his exalted character;—and all this while enduring the hourly insults or neglect of my husband—of him who so soon despised me! I do not pretend to justify myself, Beatrix; but surely you will hold me less guilty, when I say I only ask to be loved!"

"What is it, Madam, you require of me?" inquired the attendant, coming to the point.

"It is almost midnight!—All are at rest in the palace!—Have you the courage to go to the residence of the minister? Ask to speak to his secretary, Volfrag, and deliver this letter to him. Both are in my secret, and never will betray me!"

"But this hour, Madam?"

"Do not refuse me!—it is my life I ask you! Nay, more, Beatrix! it is for his I tremble!"

Beatrix remained silent. The Princess wrote a few lines, sealed the letter, and was about to deliver it to her, when she suddenly changed her mind.

"No, no!" said she; "it is useless!—No! you need not go."

"Ah! Madam, you deign, then, to listen to my prayers? You renounce your project——"

"Yes, yes!" cried the Princess, eagerly; "You may retire—I will see you to-morrow!"

She then pointed to the door, and the maid of honour, after seeking in vain a word of explanation, was compelled to obey the orders of the Princess.—Clementine was once more alone!

Not a word or gesture had escaped the eye of Sterner. He had seen the letter written, sealed, and delivered to Beatrix, then placed upon the desk where Clementine sat down to write. He could not understand the Landgravine's change of mind; when suddenly the opening of a panel in the wall changed the current of his thoughts. Hurrah!—He was now master of his enemy; for lo! it was Otto himself who thus mysteriously penetrated the chamber of the Landgravine!

"Some one was with you," inquired he of Clementine, having slid back the panel into its groove.

"There was!" replied she. "It was Beatrix. I was sending her to you. I was uneasy. Alas! dearest, what an evening! My heart is broken!"

"Compose yourself! This evening has replaced me at the height of favour. Yesterday, I was on the brink of the precipice—to-day, I have nothing to fear. As to the court spies, they are all in my trammels. I have forced Maximilian

to sign the order for their arrest; and at this moment the Baron and his Countess, the Countess de Wultern, Stolberg, and all the conspirators, are on the road to the fortress of Ottersheim! I have already forwarded orders that they should be strictly guarded. Their complaints to the Landgrave will be intercepted; and if, by chance, they succeed in pubblishing their suspicions of our intimacy, Maximilian will only perceive in their denunciations the malice of despair."

While he spoke, the eyes of Clementine flashed with joy; and upon hearing that he had ultimately triumphed, the Princess rushed to his arms.

"What will become of us should they ever recover their liberty?" cried he. "I only thought of you, Clementine—of your reputation. I revealed the motive of their mysterious meetings in the forest to the Landgrave, and begged that they might not be even tried. Maximilian still hesitated, but I finally vanquished his want of resolution. He has now signed. Fear nothing, therefore—never will they return to the chateau of Offenbach!"

All the enemies of the minister were not, however, secure in the fortress of Ottersheim!

Hugh Sterner listened to this interview, only a few steps distant from the Count and Princess! On hearing of the imprisonment of the conspirators, terror seized his soul. Quick in measuring the extent of the peril, he felt pride in the idea of seeking, single-handed, reparation for the outrage done to his sister; and thanked heaven for having abandoned him to his own resources. The shame of this cowardly stratagem now vanished, and he only thought how he should come out victorious from the dangerous position in which his confederates of the forest had placed him.

Appeased by words of kindness, the Princess was far from wishing the departure of Otto. Already had he risen to leave her; but she detained him, and bade him relate how the fierce Baron and his ignoble wife had received the officer who was to conduct them to the fortress.

"Not one of my enemies has escaped!" added the Count von Spulgen; "I have staked my head upon a stroke of policy; but it was in behalf of her I loved!"

"And in behalf of my sister! Do you owe *her* nothing, my Lord?" exclaimed the me-

chanic, throwing open the door and suddenly confronting them.

"I am lost!" faltered the Princess, falling back into her chair.

Otto recoiled a few steps at the sight of Helena's brother; but recovering his presence of mind, he placed his hand upon the hilt of his sword ,and was about to draw, when Sterner produced a loaded pistol.

"Your Excellency had better not attempt my life. In defending myself I might summon too many witnesses," said the locksmith.

"I implore you, Otto, suppress your rage; do not kill this man in my presence," said Clementine. "Whatever be his projects, let him depart. Let him be silent, and I pardon his intrusion."

As she spoke, Clementine interposed between the weapons of these deadly enemies.

Otto, having thrown his sword upon a chair, Sterner lowered his pistol.

"How came you here?" inquired the minister.

"By the aid of those you have sent to the fortress of Ottersheim," replied the mechanic.

"And what is the price of your silence?"

"The restoration of my sister's honour."

"Merciless man, would you sacrifice your Princess?"

"Satisfy me, if you can, without injuring her, and I will gladly accept the terms. But I have risked my life for the attainment of justice, and justice I must have!"

"What can be the object of this man?" inquired Clementine, trembling in every limb.

"Madam!" said the mechanic, firmly, "on the evening of the 15th September, the Count was with you, at the Chateau de Beauséjour; and, wanting an excuse to justify his absence to the Prince, thought that the best way of securing your reputation, was to destroy that of my sister. It would now be easy for me to take my revenge."

Otto made a movement as if to resume his sword. But Steiner composedly continued;—

"Still I will not take advantage of my position; let his Excellency find what pretext he will, but he must publicly establish the innocence of my sister, and I engage, upon my honour, to be silent upon the events of this night."

The Count now paced the room in despair, while Clementine clasped her hands, unable to retain her tears.

"It is my death, he asks, Otto!" cried she, "Implore him to forbear. Give him gold—give him jewels! Here are my diamonds! Take them—oh, take them! Think no more of vengeance, but depart!"

"I have already refused such offers, Madam," said Sterner, advancing towards the desk, where lay the Princess's letter to the minister. "I will not prolong a scene which was not provoked by me; but ask the Count, for the last time, if he will swear to receive me, to-morrow, with certain of my friends, and in their presence, prove the impossibility of his having been at my house on the evening of the 15th of September."

"I do," said the minister. "You shall be satisfied!"

"How is this to be done, dearest Otto?" inquired Clementine.

"Be not alarmed!—I have a project."

"My Lord," said Hugh, "I swore to you I would ever be on your track, and have not deceived you. Be assured that, if you fail in your promise of to-morrow, I shall find means of finding you again!—I depart; you may rely upon me. As I have everything to fear here, shew me the way out, and I will follow you."

"Go, Otto," said the Princess. "I wish to be alone. The presence of this man alarms me."

The Count took up his sword preparatory to departure, and Sterner picked up his pistol.

"Why that weapon?" inquired Clementine, in great anxiety.

"Has not his Excellency a sword?" replied the mechanic, coolly. "Compose yourself, Madam! I will not attempt the life of the Count, so long as he respects mine. But at the slightest menace, I shall fire; not upon him, but for the purpose of alarm. I will then declare who conducted me hither, while you will not dare avow why you came. Out of regard for the Princess, therefore, let us leave the palace in peace. If discovered, it is not *I* who am in the greater danger."

The Count now sheathed his sword.

"Let us begone," said he; and thrusting back the panel, a dark lantern was seen suspended in the passage. The minister took it down; and the mechanic, still holding the pistol, followed the Count down a secret staircase. After some seconds, the two adversaries found themselves together, outside the park. No sooner had they passed the palace, than Sterner exclaimed—

"To-morrow!" — and the deadly enemies parted as friends.

No sooner was the Princess alone, than, on directing her eyes towards her desk, she discovered that the letter addressed to the minister had disappeared! Turning deadly pale, her lips tried in vain to articulate a cry! She had only strength to ring the bell. When her attendants entered, they found her senseless on the floor!

CHAPTER VII.

Towards seven in the morning, Hugh Sterner was crossing the most obscure street in Offenbach, seeking to collect a few witnesses for the audience he was to have of the minister, when he found himself surrounded by the spies of the police. At first, he would have resisted; but yielding to force, allowed himself to be placed in a carriage, in which four individuals were waiting while their colleagues went in pursuit of him.

"Whither are you taking me?" inquired the mechanic, of his guards, not one of whom would answer. But Sterner perceived through the blinds of the carriage, that they were on the road to Ottersheim.

"Good!" said he, "we are going to the fortress!—I thought so. No doubt your orders are severe?"

One of the guards replied, "You are in for it, my fine fellow, and for life!"

"Better and better. Our minister seems to understand his calling right well! He is a good calculator. I am arrested at seven, he having granted me an audience for twelve."

His coolness and cheerfulness rendered his companions more communicative; and as Hugh became more silent, they in their turn, became inquisitive.

"You seem a good kind of fellow; by what chance, pray, are you our prisoner?" said one.

"Were I to tell you, you would scarcely believe me. Moreover, it is a secret!"

"True to your accomplices, eh?"

"No, it is out of respect for him who arrested me, that I am silent."

"What delicacy of sentiment!"

"For the few hours he is likely to deprive me of liberty, I would not deprive him of *his* for life! It would not be generous."

"He is mad," cried one of the guards. "He should be sent to bedlam, not to prison."

"You seldom see such light-hearted prisoners as I am, eh?" cried the locksmith, gaily.

"Seldom, indeed, my fine fellow!"

"Because few prisoners have in their keeping, the honour and life of those who imprison them!"

The guards now eyed each other in some surprise.

"You forgot to search me," said he, "on arresting me. It would be giving you useless trouble. Still, if you hold to it, do your duty."

He now turned his pockets inside out, and allowed his guards to search him.

"I told you so! Nothing but a few florins. Please to drink them to my health."

Conciliated by these words, the most sensitive of the guards put the money into his pocket.

"How is it so honest a fellow has met with so dreadful a punishment!" said he to the prisoner.

"It is something then very alarming I am to find yonder?" said Sterner.

"Imprisonment for life, and no chance of mercy;—particularly as the minister is likely to remain in office thirty years. Change of ministry is your only hope. Your friends will have time to forget you, before you leave the fortress of Ottersheim!"

"My *friends*, say ye?—I intend to dine with them to-day."

"No one can come to see you!"

"I intend to go to *them* in person," replied Helena's brother, in the same cheerful tone.

"Decidedly, he is mad!" cried his guards. But the carriage now halted in the first court of the fortress. The gates growled upon their hinges, and the guards laid hold of Sterner to conduct him before the governor of the prison.

The old Captain who commanded the fortress, having attentively read the minister's instructions was about to conduct him to the Governor, when Hugh demanded to be alone with him, as he had something of importance to communicate. The Captain surveyed him from head to foot.

"Has the prisoner been searched?" inquired he.

They replied affirmatively.

"Good!" said the Governor, "leave us, and place two sentries at the door."

Sterner and the Governor were now alone.

"Speak!" said the latter. "Here have been twenty prisoners since yesterday, all ready to make the most important disclosures;

all maintaining that they are innocent, or victims of treason; which matters little, seeing that they must remain here all the same!"

"I will not take up your time, Sir," said the locksmith. "Nor is it for myself. It is in favour of Count Otto I am about to speak, to whom I am indebted for my imprisonment."

"In *favour* of his Excellency? It does honour to your forbearance!" replied the Governor, smiling. "It is the first instance of the kind that has been under my charge.—But inform me, pray, of the nature of these good intentions towards the Count?"

"It is a secret between us; honour forbids my publishing it. But if you will forward a letter to him——"

"Do you mean to make a fool of me?" cried the old man. "You merely want to solicit your pardon! But my orders are precise; and you *cannot* correspond with his Excellency!"

"Definitively then, you will not allow me to write to the minister?"

"If I permitted all my prisoners to write to his Excellency, his whole time would be lost in reading petitions, and *I* should deserve to lose my place. I have heard enough."

"One word more, Captain! If the words o a honest man possess any value in your eyes I swear to you that the honour, life, and for tune, of the Count von Spulgen, as well as th repose of another whom I will not now name are at this moment in the greatest danger! If this day, the minister do not get my letter, to morrow he is lost!"

The firm tone of the prisoner, made con siderable impression upon the Governor.

"Have a care!" said he; "if you deceiv me, I shall repeat your exact words to his Excellency."

"You permit me then to write?" exclaimed Sterner, eagerly.

"On condition of my seeing the letter."

"Impossible! It is a state secret."

"I tell you it is my duty to examine the correspondence of all the prisoners."

"In that case, I will not write,—to-morrow, whether you will or no, I must have my liberty; and the Count von Spulgen will take my place in the dungeon he destined for me!— You will have unwillingly worked the ruin of his Excellency; and your own dismissal from office may probably be the price of your too scrupulous execution of your duties."

"One would imagine," said the Governor, "that the whole machinery of the state depended upon you!"

"In mechanics, Sir, one small wheel or pulley often controls more important parts. I hold that in my possession, which, from the depths of my dungeon, could influence or subvert the existing puppets of power. I only wish to save the minister from impending danger. One word more. If, upon receiving my letter, the Count von Spulgen do not release me from hence, you may treat me with all the severity I deserve."

"Write, then," said the Governor, struck with the frankness of the prisoner; "your letter shall be forwarded."

Sterner sat down beside the bureau. The Governor also took up the pen; and, in apologising for departing from the usual rigour, hoped to justify himself by recapitulating his conversation with the locksmith, word for word.

The brother of Helena wrote as follows:—

"When a powerful nobleman has made an untoward promise to a poor devil of a mechanic, he gets rid of the poor devil and the promise at once. But when a poor devil like

myself has received the word of honour of a nobleman such as you, without some guarantee for its fulfilment, he is an ass. Having little confidence in your word, I secured one which you would certainly have refused me. In quitting you yesterday, I carried away a letter addressed to you by the lady in whose presence we stood. This letter, and the details of our interview, are deposited in the hands of a trustworthy friend, who will place them in those of the Landgrave, should the day pass without his seeing me! Take heed, therefore, how you detain me. I possess your secret, for my friend possesses the letter under seal; and his Highness shall know the contents. You see I am frank. Be so likewise. Had I not had the good fortune to procure this letter, I should have perished forgotten in a dungeon, and my sister, whom your slander has sacrificed, would have been doubly lost, deprived of her only support. But the day of justice is come! From his prison, the man of the people, the mechanic, the speck of dirt, lords it over and crushes you! You, noble as you are—you, a minister of state—must fall, unless my sister be restored to honour. One day in prison, and the Prince shall know all. Your

agents can never discover the precious document. As for me, the rack should not tear the secret from my heart.

"HUGH STERNER, the locksmith."

Scarcely had two hours elapsed from the departure of the letter, when the Governor of the fortress of Ottersheim received an order to set his prisoner at liberty. Wolfrag, the secretary, came in person to enforce the warrant.

"What did I tell you?" inquired the locksmith of the Governor.

"So, then, his Excellency is safe?" demanded the old Captain, laughing.

"Not quite. We shall see."

Alarmed at the possibility of suspicion, Volfrag now interrupted the conversation, and quitted the fortress in haste, with Helena's brother.

"My good friend," said the secretary, as they pursued their way together, "listen to me! The Count von Spulgen believes your threat to be a subterfuge to obtain your liberty; but, even were it in existence, deems you too generous a man to take advantage of a document, which would prejudice one who has never offended you."

"I thank his Lordship for his good opinion; but cannot appreciate it much in one who has so ignobly broken a sacred promise to me," said the locksmith. "It would be an act of cowardice to flinch in my present determination. Yesterday I implored a simple declaration: to-day, I exact the most complete reparation. Tell your master, it is no longer a specious excuse I require; he must prove that he was concealed somewhere on the night he slandered my sister. It matters not where; provided it be known that the Count had a particular interest in concealing the motive of his absence."

"I did not expect this of you, after my Lord's clemency!" said Volfrag.

"His clemency," replied the locksmith, "consists in the fact, that, while I was in all confidence proceeding to my audience at the hotel of the minister, and seeking witnesses according to arrangement, he waylaid me with spies, and would have plunged me into a dungeon to the end of my days!"

"But he instantly acquiesced in your petition?"

"Ay, at the instigation of fear. Does he think to have done his duty towards me, be-

cause I am set free? No, no! The peril with which I threatened him this morning still hovers over his head: the document can still be submitted to the Prince. Let him, therefore adduce incontestible proof that he was not in the street of the White Eagle on the night of the 15th of September. Any pretext that does not carry conviction to all, that his calumny was indispensable to disguise the mystery of his movements, will not satisfy me; and I shall be compelled to employ the weapons which chance has placed in my hands."

"Do you wish him, then, to hazard his life?" demanded the secretary.

"I risked mine, Sir, to attend him. *He* has the reputation of a woman to preserve—I, the purity of my sister to establish. Our duties are the same. As to mine, be assured they shall be fulfilled to the letter. Your master is rich and powerful; let him suborn witnesses."

"Powerful, indeed! An hour ago he restored you to liberty!"

"And who took it from me?" added the mechanic.

"One whose power is at an end!" replied Volfrag. And Hugh now perceived the tears

were rolling down the face of the secretary. "Yes," said Volfrag, "the best and most generous of ministers has voluntarily sacrificed the favour of the Prince. Without your cruel persecution, he would still hold the reins of the state; you have forced him to resign them."

"I?" said Hugh, with a look of wonder.

"He had triumphed over all his enemies—one only remained. During the serious explanation that took place in the chamber of the Princess, spies were placed at the door. The voice of a man was overheard. Beatrix vainly attempted to persuade them that she was there alone. The Landgrave, fortunately warned too late, sent for the Count. At the moment his Highness's messenger was quitting my master's apartment, his Lordship returned; and, compelled to appear in the presence of the Prince, what would you have had him say?"

"He might have resumed," replied the locksmith, with a scornful smile, "his slanders against my poor sister!"

"He did!"

"The villain!" exclaimed Sterner. "Life and death for the Princess were in his words. It was necessary to deceive Maximilian. The Prince could not believe his friend

capable of a lie; still was there a germ of suspicion in his bosom. It required only a word to pass from doubt to certitude; so that when your letter threatening exposure arrived, he was already resolved to abjure all intimacy with the Princess. He now voluntarily retires to exile, renouncing happiness and power, to appease your vengeance. May these sacrifices disarm you! The Prince has accepted his resignation, and the Count von Spulgen's reign is over. He raised himself by his talents, from the humblest position to the highest; and sinks again into obscurity, to pacify you. Are you satisfied, Hugh Sterner? The minister has fallen, and you cannot now refuse to return him the document. It is not for himself he asks it, but for an unfortunate woman!"

"Had I yielded to a ridiculous feeling of pride, or the desire of humiliating a man in power," replied the locksmith with firmness, "my vengeance would be satisfied! But the reparation I exact from the noble Count, I would have exacted from one of my own condition, or indeed below it; only that with them, it would have been in the face of justice. Yesterday, justice from the minister appeared

hopeless; now, our weapons are even! I re
linquish the use I might make of the letter
but will restore it only after he has answered
in a court of law, my suit for defamation."

"How!—after his fall—his exile—you d
not relent?"

"Is my sister the less an object of scorn i
her native town of Offenbach?—Is the oath
made my father less binding? No, no!—
may the Count be happier still, rise higher ye
in the esteem of the Landgrave, there will b
on my part no petty feeling of envy. Bu
whatever be his position, so long as my sister'
fame be questioned, so long will I persecut
him!"

"You are too revengeful!" replied Volfrag

"Had the slanderer been an humble me
chanic like myself, you would approve me. I
his being noble and powerful *my* fault? It i
not *I* who sought him. I took him as I foun
him."

Volfrag reported the result of his intervie
to his master, while Sterner hastened to hi
sister at Frankfort. He was soon by Helena'
side, who awaited him with impatience. H
abstained, however, from alluding to the scen
in the Princess's chamber, and to his imprison

ment; but, for the first time, confessed to his cousins of Frankfort his motive for quitting Offenbach, naming him who had forced him and his sister to fly. He likewise spoke of the probable fall of the minister, and of his intention to prosecute him before the tribunals. Though he still concealed from his family the most important details of his intercourse with the Count von Spulgen, he was no less communicative in a letter which he wrote to his friend Anselm.

"Come back," said he, "and you shall find your affianced bride completely justified, and restored to the esteem of those who were so prompt in condemning her on the mere prattle of a child! Allow that *we* too were for a moment credulous? But the truth is about to shine forth. In a few weeks, we shall wake as from an evil dream. We will then talk anew of our plans, if however our lawsuit do not absorb the better part of our earnings; in which case, we may console ourselves that we still retain our honour, and possess our stout arms with ample courage to replenish the empty coffer."

Sterner was to return next morning to Offenbach, and expose his grievances against

the minister. Already had he selected his counsel. They were at supper, his cousins of Frankfort beginning to start objections touching the difficult affair in which he was about to engage; when lo! the door opened, and the locksmith recognised the secretary Volfrag, begging for a private audience of the mechanic. —They retired to an adjoining room.

"Sir," said the secretary, when alone with Helena's brother, "since this morning, a great change has taken place in the position of my master. From a high and mighty lord, the Count von Spulgen is compelled to drop his name and fly his country like a criminal. This is your doing."

"Explain yourself."

"The proceedings you threatened would lead to complete exposure. He must either prove an alibi for that unfortunate occurrence of the 15th of September, or send the Princess Clementine to the scaffold. To save the reputation of his Princess, he has renounced his honours and country, and now even drops his name. You cannot plead against the Count von Spulgen. He exists for me alone; who, in return for his boundless goodness, will ever be his companion in adversity."

Volfrag could scarcely articulate, so oppressed was he by his grief; the locksmith was equally overcome.

"He was a good, a worthy minister!" said Sterner. "But yesterday to slander my sister, and to-day to deprive her of her only support, are crimes not easily pardoned."

"He is about to expiate them, and cruelly! Learn however what he has done to restore you the reparation of which you are so jealous and which now costs him so dear."

"With a word he might have afforded us reparation fifteen days ago, after depriving us of our reputation!"

"He has given you more than his life, for he has sacrificed his honour to redeem your own. This morning, having resigned his office, he confided in your clemency; but when informed of your fresh resolution, when he saw that sooner or later his secret must be divulged, he exclaimed in despair—'He asks my blood then?—He shall have it!' I saw by his looks he had formed some dreadful resolution, but dared not interrogate him.

"'Follow me Volfrag!' said he.

"'Where you will, Sir!' I replied, 'to the end of the world! I am still ready to obey you;' but he heard me not! His mind was gone. We proceeded to the fortress of Ottersheim, the news of his resignation being unknown there. All the doors were opened to him, when he penetrated into the room of the Baron of Rœdelheim, where the conspirators were assembled. They turned pale upon seeing him; perceiving neither the strangeness of the Count, nor my anxiety.

"'Do you come here to defy us?' said the Baron.

"After listening to the most outrageous insults, the most bitter invectives, he thus addressed them:

"'It depends upon yourselves,' said he, 'to have your liberty in an hour, and return in triumph to Maximilian.'

"'This is but a bitter mockery!' replied the Baron.

"'I tell you it depends upon yourselves!'

"'And what is required to procure our pardon?' inquired the Baron.

"'To sacrifice *me!*' replied the Count. 'Surely you are too much my enemies to refuse it?'

"The prisoners looked at each other in surprise, and dared not believe their own ears. In spite of my efforts, I could barely restrain my tears.

"'You must draw up a petition to the Landgrave, in which I will assist you,' said the Count, 'and in which *I* alone must stand committed. All I ask you is, never to deny the terms of the document which you must sign.'

"Then, turning towards me, he bad me write as he should dictate. I took up the pen, with a sigh. Alas! I was about to indite the condemnation of my master; while his enemies flocked around me, seeming to weigh every word as it came from his lips.

"'Prince!' he now dictated,—'your faithful subjects, victims of the most perfidious treason, trust that the words of truth may yet attain your ear, and that the guilty will be punished! Count Otto von Spulgen, little knowing our attachment to your sacred person, tried to ensnare us in a plot, with no other end than an attempt upon your precious life.'

"'We will not sign that!' said several voices.

'A plot against the Prince? It is too horrible!'

"'Pause awhile!' calmly replied my master. 'It is I alone who am compromised.'

"He then continued:—

"'We pretended to approve his detestable project, for the purpose of laying hold of a written proof to place before your eyes. So long as this traitor relied upon us as accomplices, we were so many shields ready to ward off the blow to be aimed at your existence. Examine the Count von Spulgen face to face. If his heart can feel remorse, he will tell you that he only shut us up in this fortress, on detecting our design of betraying him. We conspired with him, only that we might be at hand to defend you.'

"'And now,' said he, having finished, 'sign!—you cannot refuse me this signal service. I have nothing but my life to lose! Let me stake it if I will!'

"The Countess was as agitated as myself; she had guessed my master's object.

"'Otto,' said she, 'we are no longer enemies;—the man capable of this noble devotion is worthy the love of a queen.'

"As to the old courtiers, they all hesitated. One only took up the pen, yet still, wanted courage to sign.

"'You hesitate?' observed the Count; "I offer you the means of returning to court favour, and for how little!—Merely to profess your attachment to his Highness, and say that I presided over your nocturnal meetings in the forest!—Fear nothing! *I* will not betray you.'

"He then wrote two letters; one for the Prince, and the other for Hugh Sterner, the locksmith."

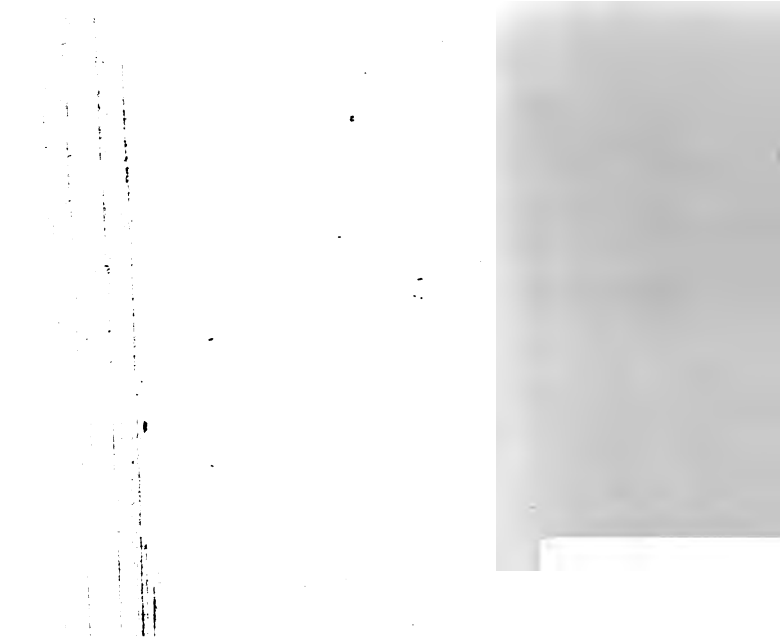
"For me?"—interrupted Helena's brother, moved to tears by the recital of the secretary.

The letter was as follows:—

"In leaving Offenbach, I cannot support the remorse of having caused your sister's disgrace. I declare, on my sacred word, that I have never so much as beheld that young person. If I slandered her, it was to conceal another crime; of which you will soon hear more. Twenty witnesses, now confined in the fortress of Ottersheim, will prove that I was with *them* on the night of the 15th of September, in the forest inn, known under the name

of Saint Hubert du Bois. May she who has so patiently endured her shame, pardon the man who sacrifices him atonement of a thoughtless word of DEFAMATION.

OTTO, COUNT VON SPULGEN."

THE END.

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